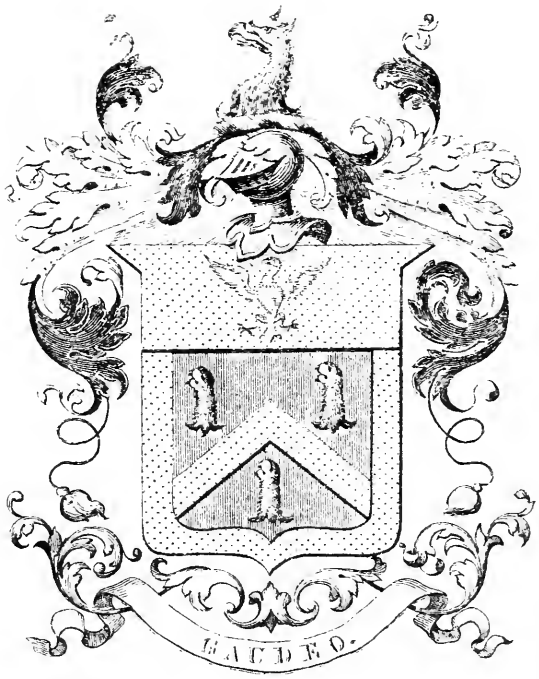

John Carter Brown.

A

VOYAGE

TO

SAINT DOMINGO.

RPJCB

HISPANIOLA,
OR
SAINT DOMINGO.
PART OF CUBA
Tortuga I.
The Three Keys
Great Silver Key
Little Silver Key
Pearel
ATLANTIC OCEAN
WINDWARD PASSAGE
MONA PASSAGE
PORTO RICO
CHANNEL
Old Cape Francois
Scotch Bay
Santiago
Peninsula of Samana
Cape Samana
Samana Bay
Cape Raphael
Cabo del Engano
Espada
Neiba
Yuque
Higuey Bay
Saona
Monte Christi
Puerto Plata
Isabella
Monte Cristi
Gonaive I.
Gonaive Channel
St. Marks Channel
St. Marks
Port au Prince
Port au Prince Bay
Croix de Bouquet
Leogane
Petite Goave
Jacmel
Les Cayes
Aquin
Cavaillon
Baiconette
Jacquemel
Les Coyes
Ile a Gravois
La Vache
Neiva Bay
Neiva R.
Azua
Bani
Pt. Ninao
Beata
The Beata Trolls Cape or Lit. C. Morgan
The Beata
The Frigates
The Broken
Bottomless Bay
Blue Hole
Cape Rosso
Cape Tiburon
Cape Dame Marie
Cape Abacou
Cape Mancenille
Cape Morgan
Cape Francois
Cape Isabella
Cape Monte Christi
Cape Engano
Cape Cabron
Cape Beata
Cape Tiburon
Cape Dame Marie
Cape Abacou
Cape Mancenille
Cape Morgan
Cape Francois
Cape Isabella
Cape Monte Christi
Cape Engano
Cape Cabron
Cape Beata
Sierra de Monte Christi
Sierra de Cibao
Sierra de Neiba
Sierra de Bahoruco
Sierra de Matheo
Sierra de Yuna
Sierra de Ocoa
Sierra de Jacmel
Sierra de Cahos
Sierra de Cibao
Sierra de Neiba
Sierra de Bahoruco
Sierra de Matheo
Sierra de Yuna
Sierra de Ocoa
Sierra de Jacmel
Sierra de Cahos
Vega Real
Vega Real
Vega Real

RPJCB

M. LE BARON FELIX
DE WIMPFFEN
Député du Baillage de Caen.
à l'Assemblée Nationale
de 1789.

Moreau del. *Beljambe Sculp.*

A

VOYAGE

TO

SAINT DOMINGO,

IN THE YEARS 1788, 1789, AND 1790,

BY FRANCIS ALEXANDER STANISLAUS,
BARON DE WIMPFFEN.

JOHN CARTER BROWN.

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT,
WHICH HAS NEVER BEEN PUBLISHED,
BY J. WRIGHT.

Les Voyages sont bons, non pour rapporter seulement combien de pas a SANCTA ROTUNDA *ou la couleur des caleçons de la* SIGNORA LIVIA, *mais pour frotter et limer notre cervelle contre celle d'autrui.*
MONTAIGNE.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, JUNIOR, AND W. DAVIES,
(SUCCESSORS TO MR. CADELL) IN THE STRAND;
AND J. WRIGHT, OPPOSITE OLD BOND-
STREET, PICCADILLY.

M.DCC.XCVII.

RPJCB

TO

HIS SERENE HIGHNESS

THE HEREDITARY PRINCE,

DUKE OF WIRTEMBERG, AND TECK,

PRINCE OF MONTBEILLARD, COUNT AND SEIGNEUR OF LIMPURG, GAILDORF, &c. &c. &c. LIEUTENANT GENERAL IN THE SERVICE OF RUSSIA, MAJOR GENERAL OF THE CIRCLE OF SWABIA, KNIGHT AND COMMANDER IN EXPECTANCY OF THE ORDER OF SAINT JOHN OF JERUSALEM, KNIGHT OF THE ORDERS OF SAINT ANDREW, OF SAINT ALEXANDER NEWSKY, AND OF WIRTEMBERG, &c. &c. &c.

SIR,

YOUR SERENE HIGHNESS, in condescending to accept the homage of a production, which can at most, pretend to mediocrity, certainly gives in this testimony of kindness, a fresh proof of the candour and indulgence which characterise true superiority. Those who have the honour to know and approach YOUR SERENE HIGHNESS, will not be surprised at it.

But if, inſtead of a ſevere cenſor, I have only found in You an indulgent Patron, let the public, at leaſt, know that it would have been difficult for me to have choſen, even amongſt the beſt informed men, a judge more enlightened, or more capable, from his multifarious erudition, and from the purity of his taſte, to decide on the merit of any literary work whatever.

No prince in Europe, Sir, I might, perhaps, ſay, no traveller, knows this quarter of the world better than YOUR SERENE HIGHNESS. Germany, Ruſſia, Holland, France, Swiſſerland, and Italy, have all, in their turn, ſeen You examine their productions, their induſtry, and the manners of their inhabitants. You have ſucceſſively paſſed from the rocks of Helvetia to the dock-yards of Sardam; from the ruins of Herculaneum to the plains of the Crimea: and You are now about to complete the courſe of

of your obſervations amongſt a people as worthy of being known as any of thoſe You have hitherto ſeen; and from whom You will aſſuredly carry away, with the moſt advantageous opinion, the eſteem and the regrets—ſo much the more lively, as your departure will be, for Great Britain, the epoch of a loſs which ſhe would conſider as irreparable, if the virtues to which every Engliſhman pays ſo ſincere a tribute of love and reſpect, in the perſon of the PRINCESS ROYAL, were not a patrimony which that country is certain of finding again in each of the members of Her auguſt family.

While I regret, Sir, that this feeble tribute is ſo little worthy of YOUR SERENE HIGHNESS, I have ſtill the conſolatory knowledge that You will appreciate it, leſs by its own value, than by the ſentiment which induces me to lay it at your feet; and that You will have the

goodneſs to judge of my gratitude by the ſincerity of my attachment, and the profound reſpect with which I am,

Sir,

YOUR SERENE HIGHNESS's

Moſt humble and

Moſt obedient Servant,

The BARON DE WIMPFFEN.

London,
April 15th, 1797.

PREFACE.

I SENT to the preſs, in 1788, "*Letters of a Traveller*," which were merely an extract from a more voluminous work, I propoſed printing with my "*Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope;*" when, called to Saint Domingo by particular circumſtances, I ſaw myſelf obliged to renounce the publication of a work which, in the preſent ſituation of affairs, might poſſibly not have been unintereſting to the reader.

The following pages contain a part of my obſervations during a reſidence of two years in the richeſt and moſt flouriſhing of all the colonies. It will be objected, perhaps, that to ſome details of importance I have joined others of too minute and trifling a nature for ſuch as look for nothing in voyages but great political and commercial

commercial events. To this I might reply, that ſomething muſt be allowed to *egoiſm*, which no more exempts travellers than other people, from the weakneſs of attaching a certain value to the honour of occupying for a moment the attention of the public. But, excluſive of this conſideration, there are many readers more or leſs pleaſed with what may be called the dramatic part of a book of travels; and I frankly confeſs that I am one of the number.

The work, however, is very far from being ſo complete as it might have been, if unforeſeen events had not compelled me to leave, in a *dépot* from whence it may never be poſſible for me to recover them, together with the manuſcript of my "*Voyage to the Cape of Good Hope*," a variety of materials, by the aſſiſtance of which I propoſed ſome day or other, to give a greater extenſion to my obſervations on Saint Domingo.

I am ſtill farther from flattering myſelf, either that the ſevere freedom of my remarks will not draw upon me an ardent oppoſition, or that I am never in the wrong. "We ought

"to

" to exterminate all travellers," ſays a modern writer, " if their relations are to be refuſed " every degree of credit, the inſtant it ap- " pears they have not had the good fortune " to eſcape the ſudden deceptions of their " own imaginations, or the diſingenuouſneſs " of others." *

Setting aſide the degree of confidence my obſervations may merit, it is certain that very important ones might, at preſent, be made on the manner in which the conqueſt of Saint Domingo has been conducted: without entering into details, however, which would only fatigue the reader, I ſhall confine myſelf to the following reflections.

The ſuppoſition that nothing more was neceſſary for the conqueſt of Saint Domingo, than getting poſſeſſion of the chief towns, ſuch as Cape-François, the Mole, Port-au-Prince, &c. and conſequently of the rich poſſeſſions in their neighbourhoods, proceeded from a falſe principle. Such tactics, with all due

* *Hiſtoire Generale de l'Aſie, de l'Afrique, et de l'Amérique,* Tome 18.

ſubmiſſion,

ſubmiſſion, I cannot help comparing to that of thoſe intrepid Buccaneers who fancied they had manœuvred with great adroitneſs when they had ſurpriſed a poſt, or ſtormed a town—which they were obliged to abandon inſtantly, after a haſty pillage!

No well-informed military man will deny that, generally ſpeaking, more courage, and leſs ſkill has been ſhewn in this war than in any preceding one. Turenne and Montecuculi made ten campaigns, and as many conqueſts, without fighting a ſingle battle: at preſent, ten battles are fought in a ſingle campaign; and the moſt paltry conqueſt, the moſt equivocal ſucceſs is only obtained by prodigies of valour, and rivers of blood. *

* I am very far from denying great talents to ſome of the generals of the two parties. Heaven forbid the Archduke Charles ſhould ever realize the promiſes of his early youth, and prove hereafter, a Cæſar in genius, as he is already in courage and in birth. With reſpect to the French commanders and their ſucceſſes—It is, I believe, not very generally known that their ſo much admired manœuvres are the work of the genius of the great generals of the Age of Louis XIV. and that the well concerted, but ill executed plan of the laſt campaign, has lain, in all its details, for near an hundred years in the war-office at Verſailles: but *Moreau* is not a *Turenne*, *Jourdan* is not a *Luxemburg*, *Buonaparte* himſelf is not a *Villars*, though he fancies he is a *Condé*.

I know

I know no method of conquering a country effectually, but by taking poſſeſſion of the poſitions which defend it. The Engliſh, maſters of theſe poſitions, of the ſea, and of the defiles, which, in a country like Saint Domingo, render all communication between the different quarters extremely difficult; Leogane, Port-au-Prince, and the Cape, unſupplied with proviſions, muſt have fallen in a ſhort time; and in ſo much the ſhorter, as by confining themſelves to the blockade of theſe places, nothing would have been more eaſy than to divert the ſtreams which ſupplied them with water; thus reducing their garriſons to the alternative of an honourable capitulation, or of periſhing with hunger and thirſt. An ordinary man would have ſpent his whole life before Tyre without taking it: Alexander conſtructs a dyke, and Tyre capitulates! Nothing proves the total abſence of a Genius for war more than not knowing how to advance a ſtep beyond the track traced out by Art.

It appears to me then, that, in a country every where thinly inhabited in proportion to its extent, and which, more or leſs a prey to inteſtine diviſions, was defended by widely

ſcattered

ſcattered forces, the only proper method of proceeding was to inſulate the different parts of defence, by interrupting, with well-choſen poſitions, the chain of communications: and then confining the whole to a war of out-poſts, without undertaking any ſiege, or riſking any engagement, but what a ſtrict adherence to a well-combined ſyſtem of defenſive operations might neceſſitate. *

Independent of the benefits which the activity and ſtrength of the Engliſh marine ſecured to the troops on ſhore, its ſuperiority gave them another advantage of the moſt material conſequence. The French army could only be recruited by levies ſent from Europe; the Engliſh had in the neighbourhood, beſides their ancient poſſeſſions, the lately conquered iſlands of Martinico and Saint Lucia; from whence the troops in Saint Domingo might have received daily reinforcements.

* Strictly ſpeaking, I know that one army may always force another to fight. But I know, too, that if the army attacked be not in a bad poſition, or commanded by a fool, it is always an hundred to one that the attacking army is well beaten.

Undoubtedly

Undoubtedly the ſyſtem I propoſe would require a much greater number of troops than were, in fact, employed :—but as I have neither the ambition nor the leiſure to trace out in this place, ſuch a plan of operation as the conqueſt of Saint Domingo ſeems to demand, I ſhall content myſelf with a few general intimations.

In my opinion, then, it would have been neceſſary to act with three different bodies of troops, of five or ſix thouſand each, including the planters and negroes in the intereſt of the Engliſh. One of theſe bodies, by landing on the ſouthern coaſt, where it would have been ſupported by the majority of the coloniſts ; and rapidly advancing to the ſummit and gorges of the mountains, which ſeparate this ſide of the iſland from that of the North, would, by this ſingle movement, have acquired two important advantages, 1°. That of menacing, at one and the ſame time, all the eſtabliſhments between Port-au-Prince, and Petit-Goave ; and 2°. That of inſulating all that part of the iſland which ſtretches from this laſt place to Cape Tiburon : and if the two other columns had moved at the ſame inſtant, one from Mole-Saint-

Saint-Nicholas, or Port-au-Prince, the other from Cape François, or Fort Dauphin, ſo as to form a junction near Plaiſance, and fall with united forces upon Artibonita, while the fleet had ſucceſſively ſhewn itſelf on different points of the coaſts; it is probable that the French, thus attacked and menaced on all ſides, would have been obliged either to extend their troops too much, or to unite them in a central point, where it would be ſo much the eaſier to block them up, as (provided the Engliſh were on any terms with the Spaniards) five or ſix hundred riflemen of that nation, divided into platoons, would ſuffice to harraſs their flanks. The advice which the ſon of Mithridates gave his father, might in the circumſtances I have ſuppoſed, be remembered with advantage:

" Que les Romains preſſés de l'un à l'autre bout,
" Doutent où vous ſerez, et vous trouvent partout.

RACINE.

I am aware of the objections which may be made to this plan of attack; but, obſerving by the way, that every military operation, how well ſoever concerted it may be, has its weak ſide, and its dangers, I ſhall cite a fact, of which I was witneſs, and which appears to me perfectly applicable to the circumſtances in queſtion.

queſtion. The authority of a precept is never ſo well eſtabliſhed as by the example which relates to it.

When the French, in 1768, invaded Corſica, they fell into the ſame error as the Engliſh at Saint Domingo: they attacked it with an inſufficient force; and experienced the fate reſerved for every operation thus frittered into inſignificance. The battles of Borgo and Saint Nicholas had, by October, ſo reduced and diſperſed the French troops, that they had even loſt the communication between Baſtia and Fiorenza. A reinforcement of ſix battalions enabled them to recover it, and to advance as far as Oletta. This momentary ſucceſs, however, would by no means have anſwered the end propoſed, if the attack of Barbagio, in February 1769, well combined in its details, perfectly military in its whole, and admirably executed in its outſet, had been better ſupported by the iſlanders—for it ought to have driven us from Corſica.

It was then the Court of Verſailles comprehended, for the firſt time, the neceſſity of proceeding more methodically, and with more adequate

adequate means, to the conqueſt of a country, which the nature of the ground, the fanaticiſm of liberty, inſidious negociations, and the ſecret aſſiſtance of England, would have defended a long time againſt all the efforts of France; if the military talents of the officers of this brave people had equalled the reſources of the genius of their chief.

The plan of the Mareſchal de Vaux, who landed in the ſpring of 1769, with an army formidable in compariſon of that which he had to combat, was nearly ſimilar to what I ſhould have propoſed for Saint Domingo. While he conducted in perſon the principal attack, Monſ. de Marbœuf, with a diviſion of the army, menaced the plain of Mariana, and a ſtrong column moving from Ajaccio, directed its march, like us, towards Corte, that is, towards the center of the iſland; of which the conqueſt was completed in the month of July.

That of Saint Domingo is, without contradiction, of infinitely more importance, and preſents fewer obſtacles. If the Engliſh wiſh ſeriouſly, then, to atchieve it, they muſt employ four means, which I look upon as indiſpenſable:

penſable: 1°. Sufficient forces; 2°. A well-combined plan of attack; 3°. A ſyſtem of warfare adapted to the country; and 4°. The art of uniting and gaining over the coloniſts, by avoiding every thing that may give to reſiſtance the energy ſhe borrows from the hatred which the conquered naturally feel for the conquerors.

I ſhould write a volume inſtead of a preface, if I were to enter into all the details of which the four meaſures I propoſe are ſuſceptible. The conqueſt of Saint Domingo by the united efforts of force and perſuaſion, is ſtill a work of difficulty: to diſſemble, would be to reduce the overcoming it to an impoſſibility—but it will be much facilitated, if eloquence be allowed to reckon in the number of its arguments a body of troops ſufficient to over-awe.

With regard to myſelf, I ſhall only inſiſt in future on one ſingle point; that the plan of operations muſt be abſolutely regulated by the locality of the theatre of war, and that of Saint Domingo, neither allowing of manœuvring in a line, nor of acting with an extended front, all muſt neceſſarily be reduced to the tactics

tactics of a mountainous country; as they may be found ſcientifically developed in the "*Guerre* "*des Alpes*" of the Marquis de Saint Simon.

I haſten to terminate this preface by a ſincere avowal. I have occaſion for the degree of confidence which reckons the ſuffrage of friendſhip amongſt the preſages of ſucceſs, to determine me to publiſh this work, at a time when occupations of a very different kind, and intereſts much dearer to my heart than thoſe of ſelf-love, have deprived me of the leiſure I ſtood in need of to render it leſs imperfect.

VOYAGE

TO

SAINT DOMINGO.

LETTER I.

Havre de Grace,
July 1788.

I WAS not miſtaken, Sir, in my conjectures, when I told you that I did not doubt but fortune would ſhortly preſent me with a freſh opportunity of practically extending the little knowledge which I have already acquired of ſome parts of our planet, and of the political, moral and phyſical exiſtence of the different nations which inhabit it.

To ſay the truth, I by no means conſider this knowledge as abſolutely neceſſary to our happineſs; but when accident preſents us with the means of obtaining it, negligence would certainly be inexcuſable: if it does not increaſe our ſtock of happineſs,

pineſs, it may at leaſt tend to render us leſs preſumptuous.

In ſpite of an obſervation of Seneca's *, it might certainly render us extremely uſeful to ſociety, if, to the talent of drawing juſt concluſions from accurate obſervations, we fortunately joined the power of inſpiring the ignorant with a degree of modeſty ſufficient to enable them to comprehend that there are truths, derived from experience, which, notwithſtanding they may run counter to the routine of cuſtom, the prejudices of habit, and the principles of a contracted education, are, from that very circumſtance, admirably calculated to extend at once the boundaries of the narrow circle in which they vegetate, and the means of being more ſocial; in other words, more neceſſary, and more ſerviceable to our fellow creatures.

"It is the extreme of folly," ſays Charon †, "for a man to fancy the whole world ought to "think and act as they do in his village." The fool calls every thing barbarous that does not accord with his own taſte and habitudes: and, indeed, it would ſeem as if we had no other criterion of truth and reaſon, than the ideas we derive from the opinions and cuſtoms of the country we live in.

* See his ſecond Epiſtle to Lucilius.

† Sageſſe, Liv. 2. Chap. ii.

Such,

Such, Sir, was not the honeſt Jeſuit *, who, taken by Commodore Anſon and treated with all the reſpect due to the unfortunate, choſe rather to be ſilenced, and finally driven from his Order, than to perſevere in maintaining that " there was no ſalvation out of the pale of the Church." The good man's gratitude was perhaps exceſſive; and yet *he* cannot be ſaid to travel in vain, who learns on the road not to damn his benefactor.

The veſſel in which I intend to embark is called the Venus: ſhe is commanded by the Monſieur Cottin, whoſe name appeared ſo often in the public papers in the courſe of the laſt war; and who merited the flattering diſtinction of receiving a ſword from the hands of his ſovereign.

I ſhall be the only paſſenger, and I do not regret it: for though a ſociety, a little diverſified, may be more neceſſary on ſhip-board than elſewhere, yet the qualities which conſtitute ſocial harmony are ſo rarely to be met with amongſt that claſs of

* Voyage autour du Monde. Tom. 2. We may pronounce without heſitation, that our Jeſuit did not belong to the dioceſe of that archbiſhop of Lima, who returning to Europe, in the ſhip of Captain Guiot, which had the ſkeleton of a Patagonian on board, inſiſted on its being thrown into the ſea, during a ſtorm, which he maintained had been raiſed by the bones of this unfortunate Pagan. See the Diſſertation on America, Part 2.

people which frequents the ſea, that I ought rather to be pleaſed than afflicted at the thought of being alone.

If I piqued myſelf on an accurate detail of circumſtances as they occurred, I ſhould already have ſome apologies to make for not having previouſly given you an account of my journey from Caen to this place.

I took my departure from the former town on a ſtallion, who would have carried me over no ſmall portion of the country, if I had ſuffered him to follow all the mares which his inſtinct led him to ſurmiſe were in our neighbourhood.

I ſtopped to dine at Cuges, where I exchanged my unmanageable charger for a poſt-horſe, whoſe vigour my ſpurs were as ineffectually employed in rouſing, as they had lately been in controlling the paſſions of his fiery predeceſſor.

As the tide was in, I was obliged to ride ſeveral miles along the ſand, up to the girths in water: this circumſtance, however, did not prevent my admiring the richneſs and the beauty of the country which I left on my right, as I advanced towards Havre.

If

If the ſilly cockneys of Paris who come to this port, that they may boaſt all the reſt of their lives of having ſeen the Ocean, " the vaſt ocean," would but advance a little on the road I came, they might feaſt their eyes with one of the fineſt proſpects in nature; that of a range of little hills, affording at every ſtep ſome of thoſe delicious ſituations which the Engliſh call *romantic*: where the country, embelliſhed with all that art, that cultivation, that rational luxury can add to its native charms, preſents a picture of eaſe, of peace and of happineſs; and forms a moſt delicious contraſt to that awful expanſe of dark azure, which, in a calm, is the image of immenſity without bounds, and in a ſtorm, the too faithful repreſentation of the tumultuous anarchy and conflict of the paſſions.

At Havre they are employed in rendering the port more ſpacious and convenient. Their works do not appear to me of the nature of thoſe of Cherbourg: they have all the impreſſion of prudence and utility which characteriſes the enterpriſes of a commercial body, more engroſſed by the care of acquiring riches, than the vanity of appearing rich; while the others, calculated on a ſcale of grandeur, too probably erroneous, will, it is feared, prove little more than an everlaſting monument of the inconſiderateneſs with which they were undertaken!

The

The town of Havre conſiſts almoſt entirely of one ſtreet; but ſo full of buſtle, ſo noiſy, there is no need to ſee "the vaſt ocean," to be convinced that you are in a port. Legions of parrots from all corners of the world, and of all ſizes and colours, hung at the doors, the ſhops, the windows of every ſtory of every houſe, talk, whiſtle, ſing, ſcream, chatter like — what ſhall I ſay?

"Thoſe horrid birds," ſaid my landlady, whom I had been liſtening to for an hour—"would to "God they were all at the bottom of the ſea!"—Ah! Madam, thought I—if you were like them—in a cage!

We ſhall ſail to-morrow if the wind permits. The ſeaſon is favourable, the weather fine, and the veſſel commodious, though ſmall. Monſ. Cottin is ſaid to be an excellent ſeaman, and as prudent as brave.—He is aware that the courage which borders on temerity is as dangerous to people of his profeſſion, as the caution which degenerates into timidity. This part of his character will, I hope, be a ſufficient guaranty to my friends againſt the menaces of the old proverb—"the pitcher goes ſo "oft to the well—"

Adieu.

LETTER II.

At ſea, Auguſt 1788.

WE left Havre on the twenty-ninth of laſt month. A favourable gale carried us in twice twenty-four hours, out of the channel: and had we not been toſſed about for ſome days in the perfidious gulf of Gaſcony, in conſequence of its blowing a little too freſh, we ſhould have experienced few of the diſagreeable circumſtances which render the life of a ſailor ſo perilous and ſo painful.

Our principal occupation, indeed our greateſt pleaſure, next to that of ſeeing ourſelves favoured with a continuation of good weather, has hitherto been fiſhing: an amuſement, which, joining the uſeful to the agreeable, enables us to ſubſtitute for the poultry and ſalt-meat which ſoon pall upon the ſtomach at ſea, a diſh at once nutritive and delicious.

Beſides tunnys, bonitos, dolphins, &c. we have caught a ſpecies of fiſh which our ſailors call *folles*, they are generally found, like the tunny, in ſhoals, but are a much more delicate fiſh: they do not indeed, appear ſo often as the former; for which I

can

can only account, by ſuppoſing that the facility with which they are taken, may have contributed to thin their number on our coaſts.

We had yeſterday a calm of a few hours, during which we caught two ſharks: the firſt, which was the largeſt, we hoiſted on deck with ſome difficulty, and found that his mouth was furniſhed with *five* rows of teeth!

This fiſh, to which our ancient navigators gave the ill-omened name of the *Requiem*, is the tiger of the ſea. His extreme voracity impels him to devour whatever he can maſter or ſeize; ſo that he muſt have depopulated the ocean had not his deſtructive appetites been checked in ſome meaſure; *firſt* by the ſingular ſituation of his eyes, which are not placed in the anterior, but on the two ſides, of a large and flat head, and which effectually prevents him from ſeeing or following his prey in a ſtraight line; and *next*, by the form of his mouth, which opening under the head, obliges him to turn upon his back whenever he would ſeize his prey. Human fleſh appears to be the favourite food of this monſter: hence he is always to be found in the track of the ſlave ſhips, who commonly loſe a conſiderable part of their cargo in the paſſage from Guinea to America. I am ſometimes inclined to believe, that our politicians

politicians who harangue ſo earneſtly in ſupport of the ſlave-trade, belong to the genus of *ſharks*.

A ſtill more ſtriking ſingularity attending this fiſh, and which ſhews how nature has indemnified him for the privation of certain faculties; is, that he is always accompanied by two or three little fiſh, called *pilots*. They appear to reſide principally upon the upper part of his head, where they ſubſiſt, as I am told, on the juices they ſuck from his ſkin. It is from this elevated ſpot they ſet out in ſucceſſion to direct his courſe, by ſwimming a few yards before him. It is ſeldom that a ſhark is taken without his pilots being taken at the ſame time; for at the firſt extraordinary motion he makes, they haſten to regain their poſt:—we rarely meet with paraſites ſo faithful to their entertainer.

While I was converſing with the captain on that exceſs of ferocity, which, in the ſhark, is beyond doubt the natural and neceſſary conſequence, of a law deſtined to prevent the too great multiplication of the icthyological kingdom; our ſailors were preparing to give us a proof of that *gratuitous* propenſity to wickedneſs, which diſtinguiſhes man from every other animal.

After

After faſtening one end of a pretty ſtrong rope to an empty caſk, which they had previouſly calked, ſo as to prevent the entrance of a drop of water, they ſlipped the other, by means of a running knot, round the tail of the ſhark—an operation by no means eaſy; for ſuch is the extraordinary ſtrength with which that part of the animal is endued, that its terrible ſtrokes make—not "the "ſea tremble," according to the abſurd hyperbole of the compiler of the "*Hiſtoire Générale des "Voyages*" *—but, the decks of the ſtrongeſt ſhips. They then put out his eyes, and, in that condition, threw him into the ſea.

The efforts the creature made to free himſelf, afforded an entertainment barbarouſly ſingular: at one time he attempted to plunge into the water, at another to ſpring into the air; but equally in vain:—he was detained on the ſurface by the caſk ſo cruelly attached to him.

His comrade was deſtined to be eaten; notwithſtanding the fleſh is of a dull and ſickly white, impregnated with a urinous ſcent, and of a very rank and fetid taſte. But what is there that ſailors will not eat?—"I verily believe," ſays one of our antient voyagers, "that the devil himſelf, roaſted,

* Tom. II. Chap. v.

"boiled,

" boiled, ſpitch-cocked, dragged through the cin-
" ders, would find it no eaſy matter to eſcape
" from their teeth*."

Shooting ſucceeded to fiſhing. The calm which enabled the birds to diſtinguiſh their prey at a greater depth, and the neighbourhood of a ſhip, which fiſh appear to love—not for the pleaſure of ſeeing " a two-legged animal without feathers," but becauſe the novelty of the object attracts them —The ſhip, I ſay, and the calm had drawn around us a multitude of birds—our rivals and our maſters in the art of fiſhing.

We killed numbers of them, for no better reaſon than to ſhew our dexterity: for their fleſh, black, dry, and ſtringy, can only be eaten by ſuch as are in abſolute danger of ſtarving.

The moſt curious of thoſe birds were the *Man-of-war's bird*, and the *Arrow-tail*, (called by the Spaniards *Robo-de-Junco*,) a name apparently derived from the ſingular conſtruction of its tail, which is formed of two long feathers, ſo intimately united as to ſeem but one†. The *Man-of-war's*

* Journal d'un Voyage aux Indes Orientales. Tom. 2.

† Of this bird a more detailed account may be found in the " *Hiſtoire d'un Voyage aux Iſles Malouines.*" *Tom* 2. *Chap.* xx.

bird

bird is the eagle of the ocean; he has the ſize, the ſhape, the lofty flight of that monarch of the air. Both the one and the other, but more eſpecially the latter, keep at ſuch a diſtance, that an ordinary ſhot will ſeldom reach them.

There was another bird, which I own I did not expect to find at ſea;—it was a kind of *hibou*, or owl. I know not whether he enjoys, amongſt the ſailors, the ſame reputation his brother does amongſt the old women of both ſexes on land, that of being the lugubrous and prophetic organ of death; but he has certainly the form, the nocturnal habits, the furtive and ſilent flight of the bird of Pallas. Our people called him *Poiroux:* the naturaliſts, I take for granted, diſtinguiſh him by a name more noble and ſonorous.

At the ſight of ſo many birds, which are frequently found at the diſtance of two or three hundred leagues from any land; who for the moſt part return thither to rooſt, and who undoubtedly lay their eggs there;* one is naturally led to enquire, how they contrive to find their neſts? For,

* The inhabitants of Brazil pretend that the bird which they call *Calcamar* never quits the ſea, not even to lay its eggs. I muſt beg leave however to doubt a fact which has no better ſupport than vulgar opinion, and is contradicted by all the known laws of nature.

beſides

beſides that the immenſe ſpace they have to traverſe boaſts no objects capable of directing their flight; it is ſimply impoſſible that the organs of viſion can guide them to ſuch a diſtance. To ſay that they regulate their courſe by the ſun, is far from anſwering the queſtion; for in the *firſt* place, there are many days when that luminary does not appear: and in the *ſecond*, I have many times ſeen them flying and ſwimming around us, long after he had ſet:—beſides, how can the ſun, who varies his courſe from one ſolſtice to another, ſerve them for a permanent director?—Let us for once be candid. This myſterious operation of nature diſtracts and confounds the imagination: for inſtinct, to which we ſo readily refer all the actions of the brute creation, appears to me a word much more proper to ſpare us the humiliating avowal of our ignorance, than to explain the uſe of a faculty which Providence has denied us.

LETTER III.

At Sea, Sept. 1788.

THE more I examine the animals, fiſh and fowl, which conſtitute at preſent a great part of our

our ſociety, the more traces I find of an affinity with the human race: traces, extremely well adapted to humble our vanity, if we would call to mind for a moment that the only diſtinguiſhing faculty we boaſt, that of reflection, rarely ſerves for any other purpoſe than to render us more wretched and more wicked.

But is not man the only being endowed with the degree of intelligence neceſſary to enable him to live in ſociety? the only one who has received the glorious prerogative of communicating with the Deity through the medium of thought? As to the *firſt*, reply the bee, the ant, and the beaver; "we too live in ſociety; and rather more harmo-" niouſly than you; and as to the "*communication*" "you ſpeak of, we do not ſee, though you have "now enjoyed it ſo many thouſand years, that it "has contributed to render you a jot wiſer, hap-" pier, or better."

I ought to have more knowledge, or to uſe the proper term, leſs ignorance of the natural hiſtory of the different animals around us than I boaſt at preſent, to enable me to ſpeak correctly and pertinently on the ſubject. I ſhall therefore confine myſelf to a few circumſtances which forced themſelves on my obſervation.

The

The fiſh moſt commonly met with is the porpoiſe. They ſwim in ſhoals, are found almoſt in all latitudes, and are divided into two ſpecies, the *porpoiſe*, properly ſo called, and the *moine* or monk. Both are too well known on our coaſts, to render any farther deſcription of them neceſſary. The ſailors aſſert that they always ſwim againſt the wind; and I, who am no ſailor, and who love to verify theſe kind of obſervations, aſſure you in my turn, that out of twenty trials, nineteen contradicted the aſſertion!

There exiſts with regard to the *procellaria* (vulgarly the *halcyon*, or tempeſt-bird, and who is not much unlike the martlet, or land ſwallow) a prejudice equally ridiculous: he is ſaid to be the precurſor of ſtorms *; and yet, in all the latitudes I have run through from north to ſouth, I have never found the aſſertion juſtified by experience in a ſingle inſtance. The bird probably fiſhes with more ſucceſs in louring and tempeſtuous weather, than under a ſerene ſky; and this I doubt not gave riſe to the fable.

* See Bourgainville's "*Voyage autour du Monde*," Tom 1. Chap: viii. It is ſtill more aſtoniſhing to find this prejudice conſecrated in "*Les Etudes de la Nature*," a work which we read with ſo much profit and pleaſure, as to make us regret that any error ſhould be found in it.

I ſhould

I ſhould aſk pardon of the whale for not naming him before; for if bulk can give rank, he certainly ought to have ſtood at the head of my liſt.

He is here what the elephant is on land, (I muſt be underſtood to except his intelligence) the hugeſt, and without doubt, the ſtrongeſt creature of his element. There are ſeveral ſpecies of them, of which the largeſt are uſually found towards the north. They live, like the porpoiſe, under all climates, and may be met with from the poles to the equator.

A number of idle ſtories have been told of the ſize of this fiſh, more precious to commerce for his oil, and his whiſkers, than the elephant, who has nothing to boaſt of but his ivory.

Among others, the archbiſhop of Upſal mentions his having ſeen a whale of ſuch enormous bulk, that twenty men could ſit with eaſe in the orbit of one of his eyes!* Though the whale that ſwallowed Jonas was infinitely larger than thoſe of the preſent day (at leaſt, if we may form a judgment from the capacity of the *æſophagus*) yet we muſt allow him to have been a mere gudgeon

* "*Hiſtoire Naturelle des Regiones Septentrionales.*" *Livre* 21.

in

in compariſon of this of the Hyperborean archbiſhop.

The blower is no leſs common than the whale, of which it is a ſpecies. It may be recognized at a vaſt diſtance by the water it is continually ejecting into the air.

If in the ſports of your youth, you have been obliged to redeem a forfeit by a kiſs, for having raiſed a finger at "the fiſh *flies!*" † inſiſt on having it back immediately. Your play-fellows took advantage of your ſimplicity; for there are flying fiſh to be found in great numbers, in the neighbourhood of the tropics. They are of the ſize of a large ſprat*, and according to my taſte (which, I ſuppoſe, you do not rank very high) the moſt delicate of all fiſh. I am ſorry to add, at the ſame time, that they are alſo the moſt unfor-

† This alludes to a childiſh game among the French, called "*Le Pigeon vole.*" The names of a number of animals are rapidly run over, and the child is required to hold up a finger at the mention of ſuch among them as fly. If a finger be held up at a wrong name, it is a forfeit. T.

* The Abbé Choiſi and Dr. Dellon ſay they are ſometimes found as large as a herring; but this is an abſolute falſity. See "*Relation d'un Voyage aux Indes Orientales.*" *Tome* 1. *Chap.* 2. and *Journal du Voyage de Siam, Page* 30.

tunate: for they ſeem to have received the faculty of eſcaping from ſuch fiſh as ſwim better than themſelves, only to be made the prey of birds, when the imminence of their danger compels them to have recourſe to their wings. Whole flights of them ſometimes fall upon deck, where they are received with an hoſpitality not leſs fatal to them than the hatred of their voracious purſuers. Their delicate wings can only ſuſtain them, while they preſerve a certain portion of humidity; and in no caſe does their flight extend beyond a muſquet ſhot at a time *.

Thus, Sir, like the weak, to whom an additional talent is frequently little more than a freſh claim to the hatred of the ſtrong, theſe unfortunate fiſh find, in the advantage which nature has given them, a new ſource of perſecutions and dangers!

Veſſels bound to the Weſt Indies are ſometimes forced by contrary winds and currents, to range along the Azores. In this caſe it is not uncommon for birds, blown off the land, to make to them as

* See the deſcription of this fiſh in the "*Hiſtoire d'un Voyage aux Iſles Malouines, Tom.* 1. *Chap.* 1. Dom. Pernetty the author, very incorrectly, in my opinion, calls it amphibious, becauſe it has the power of quitting its element. But to conſtitute an animal really amphibious, it ſeems neceſſary that it ſhould not momentarily quit the land or water, but be able to inhabit and live in the one and the other alternately.

to

to a port. I can ſay from experience that they are not better received than the flying fiſh. If an acquaintance with mankind has rendered them miſtruſtful, and they will not ſuffer themſelves to be taken, they only eſcape for a moment, to meet a more lingering fate, when the total exhauſtion of their ſtrength precipitates them from the air, where they can no longer ſuſtain themſelves.

The neighbourhood of the Azores, diſcovered by Gonſalves Villo, recalls to my mind one of the many ſtories blazed about by voyagers: to ſay nothing of the *qui-pro-quo's* of their editors, who, wholly unacquainted with nautical affairs, give us from time to time, in a tone of the moſt impoſing gravity, the moſt laughable abſurdities *.

I allude to the ſtory of the equeſtrian ſtatue, found in the iſle of *Cuervo* or *Corvo*. It was covered, we are told, with a cloak; was bare-headed; held the bridle of its horſe in the left hand, and with the right, pointed to the Occident †.

* Of this the author gives a curious inſtance; but as the miſtake turns on the ſimilarity of two phraſes, which in our language are totally diſtinct, it could not be made obvious to the Engliſh reader. I have therefore omitted it. T.

† *Hiſtoire Generale des Voyages, Tome* 1. *Livre* 1. *Chap.* 1.

If this fable was imagined for the purpoſe of overcoming the obſtinate incredulity of thoſe who, for reaſons beſt known to themſelves, denied the poſſibility of the exiſtence of a new world; it preſents us with a melancholy truth—that we cannot hope to ſubdue that ſpecies of ignorance which believes only in the moſt common occurrences, or in miracles; but by aſſuming the maſk, and the language of impoſture.

The weather ſtill continues fine. Our paſſage will be rather long, but it will be at the ſame time extremely pleaſant; and I flatter myſelf, exempt in a great degree, from thoſe hardſhips which render the ſtate of a mariner little better than that of a galley-ſlave. The perfect harmony which reigns on board, and the laudable pains taken to vary our occupations, contribute to beguile the time, and puſh us cheerily on our way. The captain keeps his men continually employed, to obviate the conſequences of idleneſs, which are always fatal to good order. Some of them make tow, others mend the ſails, ſplice the cables, &c. &c. works by no means laborious in themſelves, and carried on with mirth and ſong, under a tent raiſed on deck to ſecure the workmen from the too great heat of the ſun. I frequently amuſe myſelf with partaking their occupations; and untwiſt old ſtrands of cord, as your fair ladies on ſhore do threads of gold wire;

ſo that, if I do not reap from my voyage all the advantages I expect, at leaſt I ſhall have learnt how to make *half-hitch knots!*

In croſſing the tropic we performed the ceremony of baptizing the *profane* *, that is to ſay, thoſe who had never croſſed it before; but with a conſiderable degree of decency, and mutual reſpect; without which, pleaſure degenerates into pain, and play into actual ſtrife. An entertaining book, a game at piquet, in which M. Cottin did not forget his old trade of *privateering*, and the relation of ſome very ſingular and intereſting events in the life of this brave ſeaman, filled up the remainder of the day; and even carried our converſation pretty far into the enſuing night.

* See the tedious details of this ceremony in the ſecond chapter of the "*Voyage aux Iſles Malouines.*" The author gravely obſerves that "the ancients (who had no compaſs, and who in "their longeſt voyages never loſt ſight of land) were unacquainted "with this ridiculous ceremony!!!" It is undoubtedly paſſing ſtrange that a rite, derived from an inſtitution altogether modern, when compared with the exiſtence of the Tyrians, the Phœnicians, and the Carthaginians, ſhould not have been practiſed by thoſe navigators.

The diſorders to which this foolery has given birth, have occaſioned it to be totally prohibited on board the king's ſhips; and I cannot help thinking it a little extraordinary that a groſs caricature of a ſacrament, confeſſedly of divine inſtitution, ſhould ever have been ſuffered among thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians.

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LETTER IV.

Jaquemel, St. Domingo.
October 1788.

I HAVE now been a week on ſhore; and, aſſuredly, I was not altogether wrong in feeling no mighty ſymptoms of eagerneſs to arrive. What a country! what manners! what ——! But, as I am too old to yield without reſiſtance to the force of the firſt impreſſion, I have adopted a reſolution which I believe you will think not unwiſe. It is to ſuffer, what Montaigne calls "the edge of "novelty" to be blunted, that a noviciate of ſome months ſilence, and obſervation, may ripen and mature the judgment I propoſe to hazard on the men and the manners of the country.

I am anxious, if it be poſſible, which I hope it is, to avoid the two principal rocks on which the majority of travellers ſplit, exaggeration, and precipitate judgment. I ſhall not, therefore, like them, forming an opinion of the whole from a part, unbluſhingly ſketch the portrait of a nation from a few traits of a particular ſociety—paint man in his collective capacity, from an individual; and lay it down as an indiſputable axiom, that "*all the*

"*women*

"*women of Rome wear perriwigs*," * becauſe I accidentally ſaw "*the charming Roſalind*" with falſe hair! "Travellers have long been noted," ſays M. Volney †, "for a ſtrong propenſity to aggran-"dize the theatre of their travels:" from this reproach I hope alſo to eſcape.—But to return to my voyage.

The conſtant good weather we experienced, having permitted us to take an obſervation almoſt every day, M. Cottin told me on the twenty-fourth, that if no croſs accident intervened, we ſhould ſee the iſland of *Deſirada* before noon the next day. This was actually the caſe; and this, I think, is the only inſtance that ever fell under my notice, of a correſpondence ſo perfectly exact between the obſervation of the latitude, and the meaſure of the log-line. This laſt is extremely ſubject to error; it furniſhes, however, the only means of eſtimating the run, when the abſence of the ſun renders the quadrant, or the octant, of no ſervice.

* *Lettres ſur l'Italie, par M. le Preſident Du Paty.* Tom. 2. Lettre 87. Another proof of this precipitation, leſs excuſable in a nation famed for reflection, may be found in "*Anſon's Voyage round the World*," Vol. 3. Lib. 3. Chap. 9. where the compiler raſhly determines on the probity and the manners of the vaſt empire of China from a few diſhoneſt artifices of the inhabitants of Canton.

† *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte.* Tom. 2. Chap. 18.

The

The conſideration of my being arrived in a new world, would have rendered me very attentive to the chain of iſlands we were about to coaſt, even though the pleaſure of ſeeing land, a pleaſure which can only be felt in perfection by the navigator, had not rivetted my eyes to every ſpot that roſe above the water.

We ſaw, on the left, Deſirada, which Columbus did not diſcover till his ſecond voyage; ill-informed geographers repreſent it as uninhabited; it nevertheleſs contains a few planters, who raiſe a little coffee and cotton. We alſo ſaw the iſland of Guadaloupe, which we paſſed ſufficiently near to enable us to diſtinguiſh the houſes ſcattered along the coaſt.

On the right we left *Monſerrat*, a mountain whoſe ſteep acclivities do not ſeem very ſuſceptible of culture; and alſo the iſland of *Porto Rico*.——An accident which might have proved fatal, had nearly deprived me of the pleaſure of continuing my obſervations.

Monſieur Cottin wiſhed to fall in with the weſtern point of St. Domingo, which we were now approaching. I had been tempted to ſtay on deck by the extreme beauty of the evening; and having taken my ſtand near the fore-ſhrouds about midnight,

night, I thought I ſaw ſomething duſky and grey-iſh break the line of the horizon. By keeping my eye ſteadily upon the object, I diſcovered it to be low land; and as we were running directly for it with all our ſails ſet, and a freſh breeze, I ſaw there was not a moment to loſe.

Without ſaying a word to the officer of the watch, I ran to wake the captain, whom I conducted to the fore-caſtle. His preſence of mind was equal to his aſtoniſhment: he immediately requeſted me to let fly the ſtarboard ſheets, and, at the ſame time ſeizing the tiller of the helm, he ordered the veſſel to be put about; and the ſails luckily filled.—It was time, Sir, for we were not two cable-lengths from the land, which proved to be the little iſland of *Saona*, on which, if we had been ſhipwrecked, we ſhould have found nothing but ſand.

This accident enabled us to correct our reckoning: we now ſtood out to ſea, and I went to lie down for a few hours refreſhment.

The ſouth part of St. Domingo was full in view when I awoke. The breeze, which blew from the land, brought us a confuſed mixture of emanations from a thouſand different aromatics, amongſt which the delicious perfume of the acacia was not the leaſt prevalent.

Behold,

Behold, then, ſaid I to myſelf, this land, this firſt ſample of a new world *!—a world whoſe diſcovery muſt have filled Columbus with the pureſt joy; as it ſeparated him at once from the croud of raſh adventurers, to elevate him to the rank of the greateſt, and moſt illuſtrious characters! Never did a bolder enterpriſe decide a more important queſtion. What a moment! what a triumph for the admiral and his aſſociates! Inheritors of the power of the Omnipotent, continuators of his works, they had completed the creation! Hiſtory is only converſant with facts: we muſt therefore tranſport ourſelves in idea, into the midſt of the crew, if we would form any adequate conception of their aſtoniſhment: we muſt hear their cries of joy; we muſt ſee the expreſſion of affectionate and ſupernatural reſpect take place of the inquiet, and frowning glances of miſtruſt, diſcouragement and hatred, ſmarting under its ſufferings. How muſt thoſe men, madly impatient for land, have devoured with their eyes this unknown ſoil, theſe new productions, that ſtrange appearance of nature †! How muſt the ſight

* Though Columbus had previouſly (i. e. October 8th 1492) diſcovered *Guanahami* or *San Salvador*, one of the Bahama iſlands, yet I have taken the liberty to make a kind of tranſpoſition; becauſe Saint Domingo was the firſt ſpot where the Europeans formed a ſettlement.

† We muſt have a very inadequate idea of the delirium of joy into which the firſt ſight of land threw theſe people, to ſay, with the

ſight of this iſland have aggrandized their chief, even in the opinion of thoſe amongſt them who, not long before, exclaimed with the courtiers of the Eſcurial, "Nothing was ever more wild than "this enterprize;*" but who will not at their return, ſay with them, "Nothing was ever more ſimple." No, they will be anxious to partake the glory of it, as they have partaken the danger.

Domingo was firſt ſeen on Sunday the ſixth of December, 1492: and the prodigious influence of the diſcovery; the revolution it has wrought in the commerce, the politics, and the opinions of Europe, muſt for ever render the epoch memorable in the annals of modern hiſtory.

What a contraſt, Sir, in the conſequences of the principles adopted by the different powers, as they were actuated either by the ſpirit of *commerce*, or of

the compilers of the "*Hiſtoire Générale des Voyages*," Tome 10. Liv. 1. Chap. 1. "that the firſt time the Spaniards landed in the "new world, they kiſſed the ground with humility."—No! they kiſſed it "with tranſport," as is aſſerted with much more appearance of probability by the author of the "*Hiſtoire Générale de l'Aſie et de l'Afrique.*" Tome 13.

* Columbus firſt offered his ſervices to Don Juan, king of Portugal, who rejected them. In a journey which he made to this prince's court, after his return from America in 1493, the courtiers adviſed their maſter to put him to death: nay, they even went ſo far as to offer to aſſaſſinate him themſelves!

of *conqueſt* †! *That* introduced into the new world, vices, arts, and wants; *this*, ſlavery and death. At the voice of the *firſt*, I ſee the indigent Batavian ſtart from his barren waſtes, traverſe the globe, and by his parſimonious and perſevering induſtry, cover his marſhes with the riches of both worlds; and plant at the extremities of the earth, colonies more extenſive, more wealthy and more populous than the country that gave them birth: while the Spaniard depopulates his delicious provinces to go and depopulate the Antilles, Mexico, and Peru; and to raiſe wretched haunts for Capuchins, on the ruins of the proud empire of Montezuma *! Surely the coldeſt imagination muſt turn with horror from the glories of Cortez and his ſucceſſors, when it is recollected that they coſt theſe unhappy countries more

† The deſire of acquiring a perfect knowledge of the globe we inhabit, has given birth to a new ſpecies of ambition, that of diſcovery. Its conſequences, with reſpect to the people newly diſcovered, do not differ much from thoſe of the other two. It is to the credit of the natives of Van Dieman's land, or New Holland, that they were almoſt the only ſavages who had good ſenſe enough to reject with contempt the preſents they did not want, and which would only have created for them new neceſſities. See "*Nouveau Voyage a la Mer du Sud.*" Page 29.

* I am not to be told that the monks of Mexico obſerve their vow of poverty as little as thoſe of other places.—But the ſumptuouſneſs of the churches, the opulence of the monaſteries, and the luxury of the clergy, no more ſupply the deficiencies of cultivation (the

more than twenty millions of men *! "What "bleſſings," ſays Monteſquieu, "might not the "Spaniards have conferred on the Mexicans! They "might have given them a mild and beneficent "religion; and they brought them a frantic ſuper-"ſtition; they might have ſet the ſlaves free; and "they made the free ſlaves; they might have ſhewn "them the enormity of human ſacrifices; and they "exterminated whole nations. I ſhould never have "done, if I were to recount all the good they did "not do them, and all the evil they did †."

Adieu.

(the true baſis of the wealth of the colonies) than the lubricity of the monks thoſe of population. In vain does Peru produce gold; it will never be truly rich, till it produces men and grain. In the city of Mexico alone, I am informed, there are *nine and twenty* monaſteries, and *twenty* nunneries!

* Carjaval boaſted on his death bed, that he had murdered twenty thouſand Indians with his own hand!

† *De L'Eſprit des Lois.* Liv. 10. Chap. 4.

LET-

LETTER V.

Jaquemel, October 1788.

I RESUME, Sir, without any preamble, the ſubject of my laſt letter.

The variety of the aſpects, the novelty of the forms under which a rapid vegetation developes, beneath a burning atmoſphere, productions unknown to the temperate zones; the line of country, of which no human voice interrupts the ſilence, no trace of cultivation the ſolitude; gave full employment for ſome hours to my eyes and my thoughts.

What is become of the gentle and peaceable beings who once inhabited it? Speak, Europeans:—tell me, where are they?—As long as they exerciſed the virtues of hoſpitality in your favour, you were ſatisfied with enſlaving them.—Is it not ſo? But the moment you perceived that, ſtartled at the exceſs of your abſurd and brutal turpitude, they paſſed from love to hatred, from adoration to contempt, you haſtened, like ferocious beaſts, to exterminate men, who had received you like Gods! In vain do you flatter yourſelves that time will efface the memory of your crimes. There exiſts

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—on this ſhore there exiſts, a memorial, a river *, whoſe name united with its waves, will roll down to the lateſt poſterity, the remembrance of your madneſs and your guilt!

Such, Sir, were my reflections on the firſt ſight of Saint Domingo: you will not confound them, I hope, with thoſe of a factitious enthuſiaſm.

The queſtion, whether the diſcovery of America has been advantageous or not, to *Europe*, remains hitherto undecided: but that of the influence it has had on the happineſs of the natives of this part of the new world, is unfortunately but too well ſettled—they exiſt no more! †

The true, the original name of Saint Domingo, is involved in obſcurity. Francis Coreal informs us that the natives called it Quiſquia, Haïti, and Cipanga ‡. It ſeems to me that theſe were not

* The River of Maſſacre.

† One of the Caciques of this iſland had ſucceeded in forming an eſtabliſhment to the north-eaſt of Saint Domingo, of about four thouſand of his countrymen, whom he governed under the title of Cacique of Haïti, perfectly independant of the Spaniards, excepting that there exiſted, in caſes of importance, an appeal from his deciſions to the "Audience Royale." But ſo long ſince as 1718, the eſtabliſhment was reduced to about *four-ſcore* people of both ſexes.

‡ "*Relation des Voyages*," &c. Tom. 1. Chap. 1.

ſo

ſo much the name of the whole iſland, as of the different diſtricts, in which the original inhabitants had formed their eſtabliſhment. The Spaniards, at firſt, called it Iſabella*; afterwards they gave it the name of Hiſpaniola. In this they were followed by all the commercial people of Europe, except the French, who, confounding the name of the capital, San Domingo †, with that of the iſland, called, and ſtill continue to call it, Saint Domingo.

I return once more to my voyage.

We found ourſelves about ſun-ſet, either by the negligence of the ſteers-man, or the force of the currents, unexpectedly under a bold and rocky ſhore, near the mouth of the river Naiba: here the wind failed us at once; ſo that we were obliged (for we were not in ſoundings) to hoiſt out the boats, and tow the veſſel into the offing.

I was much pleaſed with the ſight of the Naiba or Neiva, one of the moſt conſiderable rivers of

* *Correſpondence de Fernand Cortez*, &c. Lettre I.

† The "*Hiſtoire Generale des Voyages*" concludes the hiſtory of the foundation of this city, with a moſt unpardonable blunder. "It became," ſays he, "in proceſs of time, under the name of "Saint Domingo, one of the moſt flouriſhing of the French "Settlements."

the

the iſland. It appeared to roll majeſtically through an extenſive valley, and, at no great diſtance from the ſea, to divide itſelf into a number of channels, which had the happieſt effect imaginable. Yet this charming ſpot did not appear, from aught I ſaw, to be either cultivated or inhabited: a circumſtance I could not help regretting; as I much queſtion whether it be poſſible to find elſewhere a ſoil more fertile, or a ſituation which promiſes greater reſources for convenience and pleaſure, to the planter; to whom the neighbourhood of a navigable river is always an advantage; as it facilitates the carriage of his merchandize.

The courſe of this river ſeems expreſsly calculated to form a natural barrier between the French and Spaniſh poſſeſſions: an idea which ſtruck the commiſſioners employed on the part of France, to ſettle the limits between the two powers, before the all-powerful logic of the Spaniſh commiſſaries proved the propriety of a different line of demarcation. Thus France loſt a large extent of valuable territory; while Spain, who left it wholly uncultivated, gained—what?—a mere contraction of her neighbour's poſſeſſions. This, you will ſay, is ſtill ſomething: it is ſo, without doubt; but Spain appears to have forgotten long ſince, that the power of a ſtate depends leſs on its territorial ſpace, than on its po-

 pulation.

pulation. What makes this demarcation ſtill more extraordinary is, that ſo long ago as 1698, the Naïba is ſpecified in the letters patent for the creation of the company of Saint Domingo, as forming with Cape Tiberon, the limits of the coaſt towards the ſouth.

The Spaniſh part of Saint Domingo is infinitely more extenſive, more fertile, and more abundantly ſupplied with water than the French; but, on the other hand, there is too little induſtry to be found in it, and too many monks. I am well aſſured that their eſtates are well cultivated, and their revenues well adminiſtered. The monks have always paſſed for good managers, and intelligent huſbandmen: but I muſt take the liberty of obſerving that Uſufructuaries in a ſtate of celibacy, labouring for a fixed number of ſucceſſors, and not for an unlimited poſterity, will be leſs anxious in general to extend their cultivation, than to improve, and bring it to perfection. Even this, it muſt be confeſſed, is an advantage: ſtill, however, it is an error of no ſmall magnitude, and which affects the government on the ſide of intereſt, more, perhaps, than any other; to multiply, in the colonies eſpecially, ſuch eſtabliſhments as check the progreſs of population *, and, conſequently, the breaking

* The Spaniſh part of Saint Domingo contained in 1717 no more than eighteen thouſand four hundred and ten white inhabitants,

breaking up of new ground; induſtry, commerce, &c. &c.

Let us ſuppoſe, Sir, that there are in Saint Domingo five thouſand monks. Subſtitute in their ſtead as many married men: the conſequence will be, that in twenty years theſe five thouſand monks will be replaced by a population of thirty or forty thouſand individuals, clearing the ground, planting, gathering their different productions, and paying to the ſtate at the rate of ten piaſters a head*, above two million livres. Should this ſum even be abſorbed by the expences of an adminiſtration neceſſarily increaſed with an increaſing cultivation, there would ſtill remain to the ſovereign, the amount of the duties, both on the importation of colonial produce, and on the exportation of the various articles, with which the mother country has an inconteſtable and excluſive right to ſupply the colonies, in return for the expence of protecting, or in other words of preſerving them.

tants, including about five hundred Frenchmen, who were principally engaged in the coaſting trade: and I am credibly informed that neither the induſtry, nor the population of the iſle, have much increaſed ſince that period.

* In Europe this would be thought enormous; but it is not ſo in the colonies, where an equal quantity of ſoil is infinitely more valuable than with us.

From Naïba to the little iſle of Alta-vela, we found the ſhore broken and unequal, and of a gloomy and unpromiſing appearance. I could perceive no traces of cultivation along the coaſt. The Spaniſh coloniſts, naturally indolent, and moderate in their deſires, are ſatisfied with breeding a few head of cattle, on whoſe milk they ſubſiſt; and planting a little tobacco, which they ſmoke, ſtretched at their length in a hammock, ſuſpended between two trees. The more active among them carry on a trifling commerce with the French in *taſſo* or ſmoked bacon, and in live ſtock, of which the horſe, known by the name of *Baya-hondros*, is the moſt valuable article. They alſo, I believe, furniſh Europe at preſent with that excellent ſpecies of tobacco called Saint Domingo; for the inhabitants of the French part of the iſland ſcarcely cultivate enough to ſupply the home conſumption.

We paſſed Alta-vela within piſtol-ſhot. It is a mere rock, with a few green ſpots about it, and which, looking forward to the time when ſome one of an invincible paſſion for ſolitude, ſhall fix his hermitage there, ſerves, in the interim, as a retreat for prodigious numbers of ſea birds. Thoſe who wiſh to fall in with land in the ſouth part of Saint Domingo, ſhould always endeavour to make this little iſland; a matter by no means difficult,

as

as it may be ſeen at a great diſtance: Its appearance is extremely ſingular, being that of a firſt-rate man of war under full ſail. It was undoubtedly this circumſtance that induced the Spaniards to give it the name of *Alta-vela*.

It will not be impertinent here, to obſerve, that this important point of recognition, is moſt inaccurately laid down in the coaſting chart of the Antilles, lately taken by the officers of the royal navy. Not content with verifying the error in this, as well as in D'Après Pilots' Directory; we had the curioſity to examine an old chart of Saint Domingo, which I accidentally picked up, on my way to Caen; here we found the poſition of Alta-vela determined with the greateſt accuracy! When we reflect that the indolence, the inadvertency, the want of exactneſs, in the officers intruſted with an affair of ſuch importance as laying down the coaſts, may coſt the lives of thouſands of their fellow-creatures; we muſt neceſſarily allow that government is either extremely unhappy to be thus reduced to a choice of ſubjects ſo little worthy of its confidence, or extremely culpable in granting it ſo inconſiderately, to men altogether incapable of juſtifying its predilection. Bougainville, although one of the corps, cannot refrain from reprobating this pernicious abuſe of authority; and openly declares, that the French charts of the

the Indies are better adapted to cauſe the loſs of ſhips, than to guide them*.

Soon after we had doubled the iſle, the frequency of the habitations which we ſaw along the coaſt, ſufficiently announced that we had paſſed from the Spaniſh to the French part. At nine in the morning of the thirty-firſt, we were off the bay of Jaquemel; the ſea breeze beginning to blow, we ſtood directly in for the town; and before noon I had the pleaſure of finding myſelf ſafe on ſhore.

Adieu,

LETTER VI.

Jaquemel, February 1789.

NO, Sir, not even in this letter, ſhall I venture to ſpeak of the inhabitants of Saint Domingo. I do not like to hazard a precipitate opinion, eſpecially when it is not likely to be favourable, on the character and conduct of a people whom I already begin to ſuſpect I have conſiderably over-rated.

* Voyage autour du Monde. Tome 2. Chap. 7.

You

You will find then, in the preſent, little more than a rapid and preparatory ſketch:—for I have hardly yet determined in what order to lay my obſervations before you—whether the country ſhall precede the inhabitants, or the inhabitants the country; or whether (which is the idea that beſt pleaſes me at preſent) I ſhall treat of the one and the other alternately, and as occaſion may ariſe.

For the reſt, I never underſtood ſo well as ſince I have been here, the aſtoniſhing power of what is called the influence of climate. The relaxation which the exceſſive heat produces on the organs of the body, is equally extended over the faculties of the mind. There is an indolence of thought, as well as action. The ſlighteſt labour fatigues—the ſlighteſt application over-powers. Such being the caſe, you muſt not expect to find much connection in my ideas, or preciſion in the manner of explaining them. As faſt as a new object ſhall give birth to a thought, I ſhall ſet it down, if I have the power; for all aptitude to labour, all propenſity to ſtudy, is rigidly proſcribed in the colonies! What think you? Is it the imprudence of not yielding implicitly to this moſt ſage proſcription that occaſions ſo many deaths in the iſland? We ſhall ſee.

Every where elſe the human ſpecies may be divided into two claſſes.

The

The *firſt* and the moſt numerous, that of the populace properly ſo called, ſimple, credulous, and uninformed, has little more than the vices which neceſſarily flow from a ſtate of ſociety; where all require that *each* ſhould act for the whole; and where, in fact, *each* acts only for himſelf. Their virtues are of the loweſt order; that is to ſay, ſuch as, being rather inherent than acquired, do not demand any of thoſe ſacrifices, which ſtamp ſo majeſtic a character upon virtue!

The *ſecond*, and the leaſt numerous claſs, is that of the man diſtinguiſhed from the populace, by birth, education, and fortune; or by a portion of genius and talents ſufficient to counterbalance theſe advantages, by rendering the poſſeſſor of them agreeable, uſeful, neceſſary or formidable to his fellow-creatures. Supple, complaiſant, and enlightened; good from weakneſs, and bad from calculation; rarely a dupe, and ſometimes a knave: *he* will be found in poſſeſſion of virtues whoſe luſtre provokes admiration or envy; and of vices whoſe groſſneſs is but too well concealed under the charms of amenity, and the varniſh of the graces.

This diviſion is not to be found here! You will ſee the reaſon of it 1°, In the enumeration of the different orders which make up the population; and 2°, In the uniformity of principles and manners, ine-

vitable

vitable in a ſtate of ſociety acknowledging only two diſtinct claſſes—maſters and ſlaves.

This uniformity in the relations which unite or divide the members of a community, ought to be conſidered as an advantage: for, beſides obviating the effects of another inequality, in addition to thoſe which neceſſarily reſult from a ſtate of ſociety, and from human nature *; it contracts, and ſimplifies the obſervations from which we uſually deduce the character of a people.

As it ſeems neceſſary that a certain number of abſurd prejudices ſhould imprint the mark of folly on

* Nothing is more prejudicial to a good cauſe than defending it by bad reaſons: and none can ſurely be well worſe than thoſe alledged by certain enthuſiaſts—that Nature herſelf furniſhes the model of the inequality of ſociety, in the phyſical and moral inequality of individuals. For to reaſon concluſively, it would then be incumbent on man (already ſubjected to a certain number of evils, the neceſſary conſequence of his organization) to add to them the maladies which reſult from his intemperance, or from any other abuſe of his phyſical faculties. It is not becauſe there are giants and dwarfs, ſtrong and weak, Veſtris' and cripples, that there ought to be little and great:—it is becauſe the diſtinctions which occaſion the one and the other are inevitable, that a perfect equality of this ſort is as chimerical as a perfect equality of fortune, of merit, &c. Remedy the evil if you can, or counterbalance it; but do not deprive yourſelves of the only means of exciting emulation which the legiſlator poſſeſſes, except thoſe rare and uncommon occaſions where effervescence and enthuſiaſm ſupply, for a moment, the place of this all-powerful motive of action.

on every thing which relates to the human ſpecies; it is here the colour of the ſkin, which, in its different degrees of ſhade, from black to white, takes place of the diſtinctions of rank, of merit, of birth, of honours, and even of fortune. So that a negro, although he proved his deſcent in a right line from the Magi who came to adore our Saviour, although he joined to the genius of a celeſtial intelligence, all the gold "which the profound earth "hides," would never be any thing in the eyes of the pooreſt, the moſt paltry, the moſt ſtupid, the moſt contemptible of the whites, but the dregs of the human race, a worthleſs ſlave, a *black!*

"He has relations on the coaſt!" Such, Sir, is the expreſſion by which they manifeſt their contempt, on the ſlighteſt ſuſpicion that a ſingle drop of African blood has found its way into the veins of a white. And ſuch is the force of prejudice, that it requires an effort of reaſon and courage to enable you to contract with ſuch an unfortunate being, that kind of familiarity, which a ſtate of equality pre-ſuppoſes and demands.

You ſee then that the chaos of claims and pretenſions ſo perplexed and confounded *elſewhere* by the diverſity of ranks, is *here* eaſily reduced to method. In Europe the knowledge of the different degrees of regard, of conſideration, of eſteem

eſteem more or leſs *felt*, of reſpect more or leſs profound, is a ſcience which requires a particular ſtudy: and as the exterior does not always correſpond with the title, a diſcernment of the niceſt kind, a long acquaintance with the great world, is neceſſary to enable us to diſtinguiſh the patrician from the plebeian, the noble from the vaſſal. Here on the contrary, it is only neceſſary to have eyes, to be able to place every individual in the claſs to which he belongs.

From theſe premiſes you will collect (without being expreſly told ſo) that, from the governor inveſted with the power, and decorated with the orders of the king, to the ſcoundrel who, from the galleys of Marſeilles, brings with him the diſgraceful mark which the iron of the executioner has imprinted on his ſhoulder, all the whites are upon an equality.

This reſpect for colour, which, like ſo many other eſtabliſhed prejudices, is a mere abſurdity in the eyes of reaſon, is, however, the palladium on which the deſtiny of the colonies is ſuppoſed to depend. It may appear ridiculous to maintain (what, however, is but too true) that there is ſome foundation for the ſuppoſition: nor, indeed, can it be otherwiſe; ſince this, as well as all the other vices of our eſtabliſhments in theſe parts, is the

neceſſary,

neceſſary, and inevitable conſequence of an enormous error we fell into at the time we founded them.

To intereſt the cupidity of the rich, the government gave ſuch an extent to its Conceſſions, that any one (taking coffee for the medium) might eaſily raiſe a neat annual income of fifty thouſand livres *. But as the labour of a ſingle man was not ſufficient to clear, to plant, and to gather in, the productions of ſo large a piece of land; ſome infernal Genius inſpired in evil hour the project of cultivating America by Africans †.

One abuſe naturally brings on another. To the too great extent of the conceded grounds was ſoon added

* A conceſſion contained two hundred ſquares of one hundred ſquare feet each (French meaſure). Coffee ſucceeds only in mountainous tracts, one fourth of the land muſt therefore be looked upon as incapable of cultivation: another fourth is uſually allotted to what are called ſavannas, that is, meadows, and to the ſite of the dwelling houſe, its dependencies, &c. &c. This leaves a hundred ſquares for cultivation: each of thoſe produces on an average, a thouſand weight of coffee, which, at the cuſtomary price, yields an annual income of a hundred piſtoles. The deductions to be made from this ſum for the expence of cultivation, &c. will be ſeen hereafter.

† Who could believe that it was a prieſt! the moſt humane, the moſt tender of all that have yet viſited the new world, the celebrated biſhop of Chiappa; in a word, the virtuous Las Caſas, who propoſed, and cauſed the plan to be adopted, in order to reſcue his beloved Indians from a ſtate of ſlavery, which after all they did not eſcape.

added the enormity of granting to the ſame perſon, in the very face of the law, two, three, and ſometimes four conceſſions; as the petitioner happened to be more or leſs powerfully recommended by the miniſters, or protected by the adminiſtrators of the colony; whoſe cultivation, and indeed population, was materially checked by the indulgence: ſince no proprietor, how rich ſoever you ſuppoſe him, can poſſibly be ſufficiently ſo, to undertake the eſtabliſhment of ſeveral plantations at the ſame time. To elude the law, they procure the grant of a vacant conceſſion, in the name of a relation, &c. and the government which felt the want of a good law, ſeems perfectly inſenſible to the neceſſity of cauſing it to be obeyed. The negligence, or rather the diſorder, in this matter is ſo great, that land already granted, but abandoned by the proprietors, for want of means to cultivate it, has been granted a ſecond time to others; and thus become an object of litigation between the old and new poſſeſſors. This inconvenience was ſuppoſed to be fully obviated by enacting that conceſſions of ſuch proprietors as did not fulfil, within a limited time, the conditions under which they took poſſeſſion (ſuch as employing a certain number of negroes on a certain quantity of ground, &c.) ſhould revert to the crown: but it happens in this, as it does in moſt other caſes, that this act of vigorous but neceſſary

juſtice,

juſtice, is ſeldom put in force, but againſt the obſcure and unfriended planter.

Let us ſuppoſe now, that the meaſure of the conceſſions had been reduced to twenty ſquares; for the management of which, the labour of a poor European family would have amply ſufficed. It would follow, that the ſame extent of ground, on which a few negroes at preſent vegetate, would have maintained fourſcore individuals. Nor can there be a doubt, but that it would be much better cultivated by ten reſident proprietors, than by him who, reſiding two thouſand leagues from his poſſeſſions, has no better ſecurity for the care and fidelity with which they are managed, than the capacity of an ignorant ſteward, or the probity of a knaviſh agent! The Engliſh have followed this method in Barbadoes, and the conſequences are, that this iſland is, in proportion to its extent, the richeſt and moſt populous of all their poſſeſſions in the Weſt Indies. If then, as the judicious Labat obſerved, "the ſtrength of the colonies conſiſts in "the number of the whites," we muſt neceſſarily admit, with this voyager, that "the number, he ſpeaks of, can only be made up of what are called ſmall planters."

I haſten, Sir, to combat the only ſpecious objection, which uninformed, or deſigning people, can poſſibly

poſſibly oppoſe to this mode of cultivation; I mean the inſalubrity of the climate.

I reply, then, in the firſt place, that this inſalubrity is to be attributed more to the exceſſes to which Europeans uſually abandon themſelves on their firſt arrival here, than to any inherent ill qualities in the climate. It is their own intemperance which renders a reſidence here ſo fatal to them.

In the ſecond place, I reply, that the firſt cultivators of Saint Domingo, thoſe who originally did what the negroes do now, were, what were called in the language of thoſe days *ſix-and-thirty-months' men*, that is, men who let themſelves to the planters for a term of three years:—and that there are ſome ſmall diviſions of the old Grants, yet cultivated by whites, who live on them in a ſtate of decent competence. To me, theſe facts are arguments of the moſt irreſiſtible kind.

Europeans have, I know, no ſmall difficulty to accuſtom themſelves to the climate: ſevere labour would infallibly deſtroy them. At the ſame time, I am confident that ten ſeaſoned whites, without over-ſtraining themſelves in the leaſt, would do the work of an hundred negroes; becauſe they would do it with more good will, with more underſtanding

derſtanding of what they were about, and conſequently, with infinitely more effect.

" The experience of all ages, and of all na-
" tions ſhews us, that the work of ſlaves, though
" it apparently coſts no more than the expence of
" their nouriſhment, is, on an accurate eſtimate,
" the deareſt of all work; ſince the man who is
" reſtricted from acquiring property, can feel no
" other ſolicitude than that of eating as much, and
" labouring as little, as poſſible*."

The coloniſts who maintain the contrary are either ſluggards, fools, or impoſtors. In this matter, I ſpeak from my own experience; yet I have neither the habits, nor the degree of vigour which agricultural engagements demand.—" The
" heat, and the unhealthineſs of the climate, ſo
" frequently alledged by Europeans as the cauſes
" of their inactivity in the colonies, are nothing,"
ſays an intelligent and obſerving traveller, " but
" a ſpecious apology for the weakneſs of men re-
" duced by intemperance and debauchery; and
" too vain or too ſenſual to have recourſe to the
" labour of their hands†."

* Smith's Wealth of Nations. Vol. II. Book 3. Chap. 2.

† *Voyage autour du Monde, par M. de Pagés. Tome* 1.

And

And after all, Sir, what is meant by this miſerable outcry againſt the climate? Can the population of the whites be only maintained by emigrations from Europe? Is there any law to prevent the women from breeding here? or was it ever heard, or ſaid, that the air of this country was prejudicial to a Creole?

Let us introduce good morals into Saint Domingo. Let the planters, inſtead of attaching themſelves to thoſe black, yellow, livid complexioned miſtreſſes, who brutify, and deceive them; marry women of their own colour; and we ſhall ſoon ſee the country aſſume, in the eyes of the obſerver, a very different aſpect.

LETTER VII.

Jaquemel, March 1789.

MY ſentiments, Sir, with regard to the ſlavery of the blacks, are no ſecret to you. I explained myſelf without reſerve on this head, in one of the letters which I wrote to you from the Cape of Good Hope*.

* The manuſcript of theſe letters is depoſited, with many other papers, in hands, from which I do not know that I ſhall ever be able to recover them.

You are apprized then, that I have always agreed, and ſtill agree with thoſe writers who reprobate ſo ſtrongly the infamous traffick we maintain on the coaſts of Africa.

But while I do juſtice to the purity of their motives; let me be indulged with a few obſervations. I think, then, that the authors who have written on the negroes, from falſe or exaggerated reports; without the power of judging by their own eyes, of the kind of men for whom they plead, or of the nature of their ſlavery; have juſtly merited the reproaches of combatting by vain and empty declamation an abuſe, whoſe defects are more than balanced by its advantages. I further think, that, as every proceeding of this kind ought to have in view the common good, it is dangerous, nay unlawful, to excite a prejudice againſt an order of things involving the ſafety and fortune of the public, without producing at the ſame time a remedy for the neceſſary evil. We have no need of thoſe officious gentlemen to tell us that ſlavery is a hateful thing. What would they ſay to the Eſculapius who preſided over their health, if, in an overflowing of the bile, he ſhould preſcribe nothing for the complaint, but a furious invective againſt the malady which conſumed them?

Our

Our age is unfortunately too fertile in political reformers*; who are in a violent haſte to pull down an irregular edifice, without having either the talents or the materials neceſſary to conſtruct it again upon a better plan.

One ſimple argument ſhall ſuffice for all.

Your colonies, ſuch as they are, cannot exiſt without ſlavery. This is a frightful truth, I confeſs; but the not recogniſing it, is more frightful ſtill, and may produce the moſt terrible conſequences. You muſt then ſanction ſlavery, or renounce the colonies: and as thirty thouſand whites can only controul four hundred and ſixty thouſand negroes by the force of opinion, (the ſole guarantee of their exiſtence) every thing which tends to weaken or deſtroy that opinion, is a crime againſt ſociety.

In vain do the turbulent "*Amis des Noirs*" Friends of the Blacks, labour to ſupport their doctrine by the example of the United States, where, except in Virginia and the two Carolinas, there are no articles of cultivation which require a

* They will ſhare the fate of the religious Reformers. Their tenets will produce much hatred and guilt, much misfortune and diſcord, which will terminate at length in indifference.

number of hands. In all the other provinces the quantity of ſlaves is ſo trifling, that it is very eaſy to ſupply their place by whites; they are brought up with ſo much care, and treated with ſo much humanity, that if the law, which emancipates them at a certain age, produces no diſadvantageous effects on the fortune of the maſters, it adds nothing to the happineſs of the ſlaves, but the ſatisfaction of exchanging a forced, for a voluntary ſervice. Beſides, the United States, when they prohibited the future importation of negroes, took effectual means at the ſame time to prevent the progreſs of cultivation from being checked by the prohibition. Let our anti-negro men do the ſame. Let them give us, inſtead of vague and unprofitable babble, poſitive laws, efficacious means, ſalutary reſources—in a word, let them be the "Friends of the Blacks" without becoming the enemies of the whites.

I have already obſerved to you that the abolition of ſlavery is incompatible with the preſervation of the colonies: not abſolutely from the nature of the thing, but becauſe perſonal intereſt would infallibly oppoſe a thouſand obſtacles to the only method by which it could be effected.

This method is neither more nor leſs than a new diviſion of land: and you will allow that there needs

needs nothing more than the mention of ſuch a ſtep, to raiſe an univerſal outcry againſt me. However as Providence has bleſſed me with a diſpoſition on which the clamours of the multitude have little effect, I have no ſcruple to ſay, that the inſtant ſuch a thing is poſſible, I do not ſee why it ſhould not be ſeriouſly propoſed. And what can be more poſſible! ſince while I reſerved to the proprietor, from whom I ſhould take two thirds of his conceſſion, a right of mortgage on the diſmembered part; I ſhould ſtill leave him at liberty to chooſe between reimburſement by inſtallments, or a rent proportioned to the value of the fee-ſimple: both the one and the other to be determined by experienced referees.

Doubtleſs an operation of this nature would require both the concurrence, and the aſſiſtance of the government. And I have ſo high an opinion of its wiſdom and beneficence, that I am perſuaded it would contribute to the ſucceſs of this ſpecies of political amputation, both its treaſures and its authority. After ſeeing it laviſh them for the ſole purpoſe of reſcuing North America from the yoke of England, it is impoſſible to ſuppoſe it would heſitate to bring about, in its own territories, a revolution which humanity, no leſs than its own glory, and let me add, its own intereſts, inceſſantly ſolicit at its hands!

Here,

Here, Sir, finiſhes my dream!—It is time to return to my ſubject.

Do not imagine that I pretend to juſtify ſlavery, or to diſſemble the evils which naturally attach to it. I know no moral corruption more hoſtile to the manners; to the doctrine which ſoftens, and the virtues which purify them; I may even add, to the ſpirit of ſubordination ſo neceſſary in a monarchy: for how can he whom the poſſeſſion of the moſt unlimited power has habituated to uncontroul, bend to the yoke of the laws which oppoſe his will? How can the deſpot ſubmit to a prince whoſe conſtant language is "ſuch is our plea-"ſure;" when he himſelf never uſes any other than "ſuch is mine!"

Perhaps the conſequences of this want of ſociableneſs might be obviated by delegating to the governor of the colony ſuch a degree of power as would ſerve to over-awe the ſpirit of independence, ſo natural to the coloniſts. But the well-founded apprehenſion that he might abuſe it; and the fear, by no means unreaſonable, that an able and ambitious chief might one day take advantage of this very ſpirit to induce them to ſhake off the yoke of the mother country, have driven government to the expedient of rendering one power dependant on another; the intendant on the council,

cil, the council on the governor, &c. So that theſe authorities, always rivals, and never agreeing—(to give you but one inſtance of the perfect nullity of their influence on the public will)—have not, to this day, ſucceeded in cauſing a ſingle article of the Code Noir to be put in force*.

What then, you will ſay, do all theſe authorities do there? Not all the evil they might; and certainly not all the good. Each adminiſtrator, calculating on the uncertainty of his tranſitory exiſtence, leaves the care of the public good to Providence, and bends all his thoughts to the advancement of his own fortune. Not one of them fails to recollect that Galvam, the only viceroy of the Indies who carried nothing from his government but the love and eſteem of the people, found nothing on his return to Portugal but poverty and contempt†. Examples of this kind ſhould teach ſovereigns to honour, more than they

* The rage of ſaying a good thing is the ſource of many follies. It is not eaſy to diſcover why the author of the "*Inſtitutions Politiques*," ſo rational in general, ſhould venture to ſay, (Tom. 1. Chap. 5.) that "he who fabricated the "Code Noir" muſt have had a ſoul as black as ink."

† Juſtice requires that I ſhould here make honourable mention of another governor, Dom Juan de Caſtro, who at his death left only three reals behind him. Galvam died in a work-houſe. What a leſſon for his ſucceſſors! It has not been thrown away upon them.

do,

do, thoſe exalted virtues which are the ſureſt pledges of obedience, and of the reſpect of the people for the power under which they live.

I have obſerved juſt above, that I looked upon ſlavery as pernicious to the morals, and to the doctrine which ſhould purify them. If, when I come to treat at large of the different claſſes which compoſe the population of Saint Domingo, I can ſubdue my natural propenſity to indulgence; I ſhall find in the manners of the inhabitants but too many proofs of the juſtneſs of the obſervation. And if I ſhould tell you, in the interim, that education here, in uniſon with nature, far from ſupplying the youth with any defence againſt the influence of the climate; far from checking the progreſs of the too-rapid developement of the faculties, and the inevitable exhauſtion attendant on it; hurries them on, without intermiſſion, from adoleſcence to decrepitude; that it does not allow ſufficient time for the cheek of innocence to aſſume the roſy glow of modeſty; but that youth and maturity languiſh equally here; one deprived of the bloom of its freſhneſs, of the winning ſimplicity of its charms; and the other of the aſcendancy which wiſdom, experience and ſubdued paſſions uſually aſſure it; in ſhort, that from the diſguſting alliance of all the abſurdities of ignorance and ſottiſhneſs affecting talents, with

all

all the vices of an immorality, which cannot even alledge ſeduction as an excuſe, there reſults a compoſition, which preſents the humiliating picture of humanity in the laſt ſtage of degradation; then, Sir, divided between doubt, indignation, and contempt, you will perhaps accuſe me of calumniating at one and the ſame time Man and Nature. And you would be right, if you could poſſibly ſuppoſe me ſo unjuſt as not to feel the neceſſity of making thoſe exceptions which every general rule demands.

LETTER VIII.

Jaquemel, March 1789.

IF it were neceſſary, Sir, to begin the enumeration of the different claſſes of inhabitants, by the beſt; it is not impoſſible but that the one which ſtands firſt in the eſtabliſhed order of things, might find itſelf at the bottom of the liſt.

This, however, I am pretty confident is not the opinion of the coloniſts who return to Europe. Puffed up with an extravagant opinion of their own

own ſuperiority, and of the pretended delights which mark every inſtant of their lives with a new pleaſure; they will inſolently tell you that the black is here to the white, what the ſtupid brute is to the angel of light.

That, in a country where ſlavery has neceſſarily introduced an impaſſable line of demarcation, between the all-powerful maſter, and the all-ſubmiſſive ſlave; the whites ſhould endeavour to enforce the opinion of their ſuperiority by every favourable prejudice, is reaſonable enough—But that men, who muſt at leaſt be conſcious of their own imperfections, ſhould bring themſelves ſeriouſly to believe, and wiſh to perſuade others, that a claim, which is not even the work of ſelf-love, can juſtify the abſurdity of thoſe they found upon the colour of their ſkin; is an idea of the moſt prepoſterous kind: for this would be to admit, if they reaſoned on their own principles, that the tawny inhabitant of our ſouthern provinces, and the olive-complexioned Spaniard, were of an inferior nature to the Dutchman or the Swede! Beſides, if it be true (and no pious Chriſtian can doubt it) that God made man in his own image, ought we not to reſpect, even in the colour of the negroes, the relation which muſt neceſſarily exiſt between the creature and the Creator!

But

But let this prejudice remain, ſince it is neceſſary; it is as innocent perhaps as any other. Let thoſe, however, who inſiſt upon it, be well perſuaded that it can only ſecure them from the dangers which hang over every impoſtor, as long as the illuſion is ſupported by the two virtues which we love to attribute to ſuperior beings—juſtice and goodneſs.

I proceed now to the enumeration of the different claſſes which form the intire population of Saint Domingo: obſerving by the way, that there is not a ſingle deſcendant to be found of the original inhabitants.

The firſt then, is, of courſe, the white claſs. It comprehends the governor, the intendant, all the agents of government of every degree, the clergy, all the reſident proprietors, the managers, the attorneys and agents of the non-reſidents, the merchants, the ſoldiers, the retail dealers, the artiſts, and finally, all the race of induſtrious labourers, whom the negroes call *little whites*; and whom want, ſhame, miſconduct, deſpair, and ſometimes the hopes of making a fortune, bring to the country of the world where living is the deareſt, where induſtry has the feweſt channels, where arts are the leaſt honoured, and where the ill uſe which ſome of their predeceſſors made

of

of the ancient and celebrated hoſpitality of the coloniſts, has rendered the inhabitants too circumſpect to admit into their houſes any but people well known, or well recommended.

It was in conſequence of remonſtrances on the facility with which adventurers of all kinds paſſed from Europe to the colonies, that the court made a regulation, which obliged every paſſenger to appear with the captain of the veſſel, and a ſurety, at the office of the admiralty of the port from which he propoſed to embark. But this ſalutary law, like every other, is evaded; becauſe few captains refuſe to *paſs*, as they call it, the firſt vagabond who finds the art of intereſting their pity; or the means of tempting their cupidity by a ſlight retribution. Whatever be the motive of ſuch an action, it is at once a violation of the law, and a ſpecies of robbery; ſince ſuch a paſſenger muſt live intirely on the ſhip's ſtores, and conſequently at the expence of the merchants. But the agents of commerce, long ſince diſcovered, in the principles which direct it, the juſtification of thoſe, by which they believe themſelves exonerated from keeping too exact an account with probity.

The ſecond claſs is that of the mulattos, quarterons, demi-quarterons or metis, and all, in ſhort, who

who are called *people of colour**; amongſt whom I place the free mulattos, proprietors of land, or living on their induſtry; as well as the domeſtics, free or ſlaves, of both ſexes: for here the law comes to the ſupport of opinion, and forbids the white to derogate from the dignity of his colour, by cauſing himſelf to be ſerved by a white!

Originally every mulatto was free at the age of four and twenty; not in conſequence of a poſitive law, but by the unanimous conſent of the coloniſts. This regulation was extremely wiſe; as the vaſt diſproportion between the number of the blacks and the whites, ſhewed the neceſſity of attaching the mulattos to the latter. On the repreſentations, however, of ſome of the planters, whoſe calculations were deranged by the prohibition of ſelling their own fleſh and blood; the king, by an edict dated in 1674, declared that the children ſhould follow the condition of the mother! And I muſt obſerve, to the eternal ſhame of the Europeans, that if a law which debaſes them, by devoting their poſterity to ſlavery, is obſerved with the moſt rigorous exactneſs; it is not ſo with another,

* The following is an exact account of the progreſſion of colour. The white and the female negro produce the mulatto; the mulatto and the female negro the *Grif;* the white and the female mulatto the *Quarteron*; the white and the female *Quarteron* the *Tierceron*; the white and the female *Tierceron* the *Métis*, the white and the female *Métis* the *Mamelouc*.

which

which expreſsly ordains that every maſter ſhall give each of his ſlaves two pound and a half of ſalt meat a week.

The black claſs is the laſt: it compriſes the free negroes who are proprietors of land, and by no means numerous; and the ſlaves, whether *Creoles*, that is, born in the colonies; or *Boſſales*, imported from Africa.

Although the diſtance between the ſlave and the free man be immenſe, yet, to avoid ſubdiviſions, and minute diſtinctions, I have adopted the diviſion of colour, as the moſt ſimple. For I muſt further obſerve to you, that the male and female negroes, as well as the male and female mulattos, in ſpite of the acquiſition of liberty, remain in a ſtate of abjectneſs, which not only diſqualifies them from any public employ, but forbids them to contract with the whites a ſufficient degree of intimacy, I will not ſay to ſleep with them, but even to eat. If I viſit a rich mulatto, he will call me *Sir*, and not *maſter*, like the reſt. I call him *friend*, *dear friend*, &c. he will aſk me to dinner; but if he be correct, he will not preſume to ſit at table with me.

Such, Sir, is the total diviſion. Each of the three claſſes has beſides its ſhades—ſuch as thoſe which,

which, in deſpite of complexion, ſeparate the governor from the other whites, the mulatto from the free negro, &c. &c.

The compulſatory precautions ariſing from the prejudice of colour, have procured for the inhabitants two advantages, which in ſome degree compenſate for the ridiculouſneſs of it. They render the government more circumſpect in its arbitrary proceedings; and they imprint on the coloniſts a character of haughty independance, from which deſpotic adminiſtrators have more than once experienced a reſiſtance ſo inflexible, that the court has been finally obliged to recal a governor, whom the habit of playing the nabob in the Eaſt, has daily tempted to tranſgreſs the bounds of his authority.

The natural conſequence of the order of things which prevails here, is, that all thoſe titles of honour which are elſewhere, the *pabula* of emulation, of rivalry, and of diſcord; which inſpire ſo much pride, and create ſo many claims in ſome; ſo much ambition and envy in others; ſhrink to nothing, and entirely diſappear before the ſole title of WHITE. It is by your ſkin, however branded it may be, and not by your parchment, however worm-eaten, that your pretenſions to gentility are adjuſted. Thus you ſee that vanity, which on your ſide of the water

water torments and turns herſelf a thouſand ways, to impoſe on the public, and uſurp the tribute of reſpect which it accords to the claims of birth, would here loſe both her time and her labour.

Each of the different claſſes of the inhabitants of St. Domingo has, as you will readily imagine, a turn of thinking, a ſtile of living, more or leſs approximate or diſtinct; which, after all, has little reſemblance to what you will find elſewhere; becauſe the climate, the regimen, the manners, the wants, the occupations, the degree of reciprocal dependency, eſtabliſh here connections of the ſlighteſt nature; very different from thoſe which, with you, Sir, bind together the members of the ſame ſociety.

I might here ſeize the opportunity of entering into ſome details on this ſubject. But as the ſtudy of man in his moral capacity requires more application, and more experience than that of his exiſtence in a ſocial ſtate; as the influence of the climate, and of a manner of living totally diſtinct from ours, acts neceſſarily on his character; and finally, as too ſervile a regard to method would infallibly conduct me to a fatiguing monotony; I hold it to be the part of prudence not to haſten my judgment; and accumulate on one point, obſervations, which, to be concluſive, ſhould be the reſult of time, compariſon, and experience.

For

For example: the firſt thing that ſtrikes every traveller who arrives here with the faculty of obſervation, is, that in ſpite of the conformity of origin, colour and intereſts, the whites from Europe, and the white Creoles, form two claſſes, which, by their reciprocal pretenſions, are ſo widely ſundered, that neceſſity alone can bring them together. The former, with more breeding, more politeneſs, and more knowledge of the world, affect over the latter a ſuperiority which is far from contributing to unite them. Yet, if the Creoles were a little more cautious than they are at preſent in their too early connections with women; if they cultivated with more care their extraordinary propenſities to excel in all bodily exerciſes; if they ſeconded by a better method of education the natural facility of their genius; I am perſuaded, that not having to ſtruggle againſt the influence of the climate under which they were born, nor againſt the habitudes of a kind of life, differing eſſentially from that to which a European is obliged to ſubmit himſelf on his arrival here, I am perſuaded, I ſay, that all the advantages would be on their ſide. Nothing is wanting to the Creole, but a ſufficient degree of good ſenſe, to enable him to uſe, without abuſing, the faculties with which nature has endued him.

LETTER IX.

Jaquemel,
April 1789.

I HAVE been here already more than eight months, and yet, Sir, I have not ſaid a word to you about the town of Jaquemel, nor of the eſtate which my landlord has juſt purchaſed, and which, indeed, I have only viſited twice.

There is a difference of opinion reſpecting the origin of Jaquemel; ſome maintain that it exiſted at the arrival of the Europeans, under the name of *Yaquimo*; others, that it owed its riſe to *Jaques de Melo*, a Spaniard, who built the firſt houſe there.

However it be, Jaques de Melo was very far from thinking, when he raiſed his humble *ajoupa* * at the bottom of a little bay, that his name would be one day metamorphoſed into *Jaquemel*; and his hut into a commercial town, a port, capital of three pariſhes, the reſidence of a Seneſchal, a military

* So they call a kind of hut, or hovel, compoſed of leaves and branches, where the planters uſually reſide when they commence clearing a new piece of ground.

chief,

chief, &c. It was thus that Dido laid the foundation of Carthage, without imagining ſhe was about to raiſe a rival to Rome!

When I honour Jaquemel with the name of a town, you are not, Sir, to take the expreſſion literally: for ſurely a few wooden barracks ſpread over a beach, or ſcattered up and down the acclivities of a rugged and ſtony eminence, were never yet ſuppoſed to conſtitute a town. With the exception, however, of Cape François, this is the definition of all you will find at St. Domingo. One rich planter has indeed had the temerity to build a tolerable houſe here of ſtone, at the hazard of ſeeing it crumble to pieces the very firſt earthquake.

Be this as it may, this irregular group of *Caſes* (ſo they call their houſes here) interſperſed with a few ſpots of verdure, forms, as ſeen from the ſea, an appearance extremely picturesque.

A bay perfectly ſafe in the favourable ſeaſon, good anchoring ground, and land ready cleared, which has much increaſed the cultivation in this quarter, bring hither every year about twenty ſhips, which are freighted with ſugar, coffee, and cotton. For although Monſ. Raynal gives the diſtrict of Jaquemel ſixty-two indigo, and no ſugar planta-

tions *; I can venture to aſſure you that there are three of the latter, in full bearing, and not one of the former. The exceſſive attention which the cultivation of indigo demands, the ſucceſs, at beſt uncertain, and the riſque of loſing in a moment the fruit of a long ſeries of labour, have determined the coloniſts to abandon it altogether. In revenge they have extended the cultivation of coffee, leſs lucrative than that of ſugar, but ſubject to fewer viciſſitudes, and leſs dear; more expenſive than that of cotton, but more certain, and yielding a greater return.

The cultivation of the diſtrict of Jaquemel is ſuſceptible of a conſiderable increaſe: for, although all the land be conceded, it is very far from being all in hand; and what is ſo, is ſtill farther from the ſtate of perfection to which it might be brought. This, Sir, would not have been the caſe, if, by reducing the extent of the conceſſions, they had multiplied the number of the inhabitants. Plantations of a moderate ſize are always beſt cultivated; and for this ſimple reaſon, that the eye of the maſter overlooks them more eaſily †.

Among

* *Hiſtoire Philoſophique et Politique des Etabliſſemens et du Commerce des Européens dans les Indes.* Tome 7.

† "There ſtill remain in England, and in Europe, ſome great eſtates which have continued without interruption in the hands of the

Among the numerous cauſes which retard the progreſs of planting, and fetter the induſtry of the planter, there are three pre-eminent: the capitation tax on negroes, the high price to which the commerce of France has raiſed this *commodity*, and the enormous charges of what is called Juſtice.

The author of the "*Philoſophical and Political* "*Hiſtory of the Indies*" in enumerating the advantages which would flow from transferring the tax on negroes, to the different articles which they cultivate, has expoſed but a ſmall part of the evil ariſing from this impolitic impoſt. The object is ſufficiently important to call for a developement which ſhall leave the partiſans of the capitation tax without a reply.

If an equal number of blacks, ſay they, produces an equal quantity of merchandize, is it not a matter of indifference on which the tax is impoſed?

This ſophiſtry can only perſuade the ignorant. We will ſuppoſe, Sir, that I purchaſe to-day

the ſame family, ſince the times of feudal anarchy. Compare the preſent condition of thoſe eſtates with the poſſeſſions of the ſmall proprietors in their neighbourhood, and you will require no other argument to convince you, how unfavourable ſuch extenſive property is to improvement." *Smith's Wealth of Nations. Vol. 2. Book 3. Chap. 2.*

ten

ten blacks: the law obliges me to regiſter them to-morrow; and I am taxed in conſequence of it. We will ſuppoſe again, what is too frequently the caſe, that two of the ten die before they are ſet to work: the king loſes nothing, it is true; but he who taxes my workmen with an eye to the profit of a work which they have not performed; a profit which alone can enable me to pay, commits a glaring injuſtice, eſpecially as he adds to the loſs I have ſuffered, an increaſe of impoſition, which can only be taken from the intereſt of a capital already diminiſhed. Beſides, to tax my negro—what is it but to add to the price of his purchaſe, the amount of the tax? Now, the dearer negroes are, the leſs I ſhall be able to purchaſe;—the leſs negroes, the leſs cultivation; the leſs cultivation, the leſs produce. Reverſe the dilemma: the cheaper negroes are, the more I ſhall be able to purchaſe; the more negroes, the more cultivation; the more cultivation, the more produce.—In the name of common ſenſe, then, and of common intereſt, lay your tax on the produce, "If," ſays a modern writer of the firſt reputation, "the under-"taker of ſome great manufactory, who employs a "thouſand a year in the maintenance of his ma-"chinery, can reduce this expence to five hun-"dred, in purchaſing an additional quantity of "materials to be wrought up by an additional "number of workmen; the quantity of that work,

"therefore,

" therefore, which his machinery was uſeful only
" for performing, will naturally be augmented,
" and with it all the advantage and conveniency
" which the ſociety can derive from that work †."

If ever government ſhould find it neceſſary to lay a duty on the exportation of flour, what ſhould we ſay, if, inſtead of charging a certain ſum on every ſack, it were to place the impoſition on the wheels of the mills which ground it?

Another conſequence of this vicious mode of impoſition is, that the planter, to elude the weight of it, makes falſe entries: and ſuch is the facility of concealing the number from the Exchequer, that there is ſcarce an inſtance of the fraud's being detected. Thus, odious for its rapacity, and contemptible for its impotence, government trains up the Coloniſt in the hatred of the legiſlator, and the ridicule of the laws.

I hope, Sir, that the importance of the ſubject will juſtify the lengths to which I have gone in treating a queſtion, involving at once the ſovereign, the coloniſts, the commerce, and conſequently the common good of the colonies, and the mother country; by the latter of whom it ſhould never be

† *Smith's Wealth of Nations.* Vol. I. Book 2. Chap. 2.

forgotten,

forgotten, that ſhe labours for her own advantage, while ſhe endeavours to promote the proſperity of the former.

I ſhall reſerve for another letter the examination of two other important objects; the price of negroes, and the expences of juſtice; and terminate the preſent with an obſervation, which appears to me of the utmoſt conſequence, though it be not immediately connected with the preceding remarks.

The price of negroes increaſes every day with an alarming rapidity. A picked negro, who coſts at preſent near three thouſand livres, might have been purchaſed a century ago for three hundred *. If the price of the commodities they raiſe had increaſed in the ſame proportion, the evil would not have been great. But this is not the caſe; ſince many ſtates, thoſe in particular, who receive the productions of the colonies at the ſecond or third hand, terrified at the exportation of ſpecie, which the ſtill-increaſing prices of them occaſion, have taken the moſt juſt, as well as the moſt efficacious meaſures to ſet bounds to their conſumption.

On whom, then, muſt finally fall the loſs which reſults from ſo ſtriking a diſproportion between the

* See "*Les Voyages du Sieur Le Maire.*" Page 73.

expence

expence and the profits of cultivation?—On the cultivator.

From whence comes the evil? and how can it be obviated?

The firſt queſtion I will endeavour to anſwer; the ſecond muſt be left to the diſcretion of government.

Nature proceeds with regularity. She balances, according to proportions which we may ſometimes alter, but can never deſtroy, loſſes by ſupplies; that is, deaths by births; in ſuch a manner that the earth may have at all times nearly the ſame number of inhabitants. It is not her fault, if our crimes, our paſſions, and our follies derange this beautiful order;—if our avarice tempts us to tear *ten* inhabitants from one country, for the ſake of adding *one* to another!

Yet this is what is done by the traffic in negroes! The enormous conſumption which the trade, a moſt worthy rival of the peſtilence, has occaſioned on the coaſts of Africa, has ſo depopulated them, that the dealers are neceſſitated to ſeek for ſlaves above a thouſand leagues up the country!

That

That the price of ore ſhould increaſe as the mine becomes more and more exhauſted, is a ſimple propoſition: but that it ſhould be poſſible to maintain a juſt proportion between two objects of exchange, one of which continues to riſe in value in proportion to its ever-increaſing ſcarcity, while the other, bounded in its conſumption, has already reached its maximum, is, in my opinion, the moſt extravagant of abſurdities.

We muſt then look forward to an epoch, which is not, perhaps, ſo diſtant as we may imagine;—that of the total ceſſation of the ſlave trade. Of two things one muſt happen: either the difficulty of procuring ſlaves will raiſe their value ſo high as to incapacitate the planter from purchaſing them, or the Africans, enlightened by experience, and terrified at a depopulation which menaces a total deſtruction, will of themſelves renounce the traffic. The conſequence of either ſuppoſition is the ſame. It is impoſſible but they muſt be realized ſooner or later: and I do not yet ſee that any ſteps have been taken to obviate the inevitable effect—the ruin of the colonies.

A calculation made in 1775, proves, that in a lapſe of two hundred and forty years, more than ten million of negroes have been imported into the colonies. At preſent, theſe ſame colonies require more

more than one hundred thouſand annually; and if you add to this number, thoſe who periſh in the wars to which this traffic gives birth, and in the middle paſſage, by ſickneſs, ſhipwrecks, and revolts, you will find it neceſſary to double it; which in a period of thirty years, carries the conſumption to the amazing ſum of *ſix* millions!——I will now aſk you, whether it be poſſible that the population of Africa ſhould not be ſpeedily exhauſted?

LETTER X.

THE conſequences of the exceſſive price of negroes, with reſpect to the ulterior proſperity of the colonies, may be underſtood, Sir, without being particularly inſiſted on. As I may not again have an opportunity of recurring to this ſubject, I will tell you what ſteps I have taken relative to it.

It is now more than four months ago, that, ſurpriſed at the trifling profits the planters derived from their eſtates, I fancied I muſt ſeek for the ſource of the evil in ſomething beſides their inattention:

tention: and the dearneſs of negroes was pointed out to me.

Purſuing my reſearches, I found that the Engliſh of the neighbouring iſles privately furniſhed the coloniſts, for twelve or fourteen hundred livres, with as good a black as they could buy of our traders for ſeven or eight and twenty hundred.

Overcome by the intreaties of ſome of the inhabitants, I took upon me to draw up, and tranſmit to the miniſter of the marine, a memorial, in which I pointed out the neceſſity of permitting the introduction of four thouſand negroes in prohibited veſſels: and, as I foreſaw the objection of the prejudice which this act of beneficence would occaſion to the commerce of the mother country, I took extraordinary pains to demonſtrate that it ought to be a matter of indifference to her, if I purchaſed elſewhere, what ſhe was incapable of ſupplying me with, but at a price above my means; that what ſhe might have gained on theſe four thouſand negroes (a gain, by the bye, ſhe could not have made, ſince they would not have been bought of her) would be more than compenſated by her profits on the produce of the induſtry of the four thouſand additional labourers; that, all this well conſidered, it would appear that the French commerce might felicitate itſelf on an ideal loſs, which would prove the

the ſource of a real gain; and finally, that the advantages of this uſeful ſpeculation would all centre in itſelf, ſince it could only be ſupported by the funds of the French merchants.

The miniſter's anſwer was, That he ſhould have been happy to have entered into my views; that he felt all the advantages of them;—but, that he foreſaw an invincible obſtacle in the oppoſition of the trade——!

It is difficult to conceive, Sir, why the government, which we ought to ſuppoſe always actuated by the love of the public good, does not protect, more efficaciouſly than it appears to do, the intereſts of the planter againſt the uſurpations of the trade. And it is a uſurpation, whenever you deſtroy the equilibrium which ought to exiſt between all articles of exchange, by forbidding me to raiſe the price of my commodity in the ſame proportion as you augment the value of yours. A ſingle example will be ſufficient.

To avoid fractions, I will ſuppoſe that the planter ſold his coffee, ten years ago, at the rate of five ſols a pound, to the trader, who paid him in negroes at the rate of five hundred livres * a-piece. At

* The price of a negro in 1700 was ſix hundred livres, of a negreſs four hundred and fifty.

preſent,

preſent, the higheſt price of coffee is from eighteen to twenty ſols; that of a negro, from two thouſand five hundred, to two thouſand eight hundred livres. Thus, the trader who, to follow the proportion, and maintain the balance, ſhould have merely quadrupled his price, has at leaſt quintupled it; and conſequently uſurped a fifth.

We come now to what is here called Juſtice, of which I ſhall ſay but a word; for when you learn that the tribunal of Jaquemel, compoſed of a ſeneſchal, of a deputy judge, of two attorney-generals, of a ſecretary, four counſellors, four or five attorneys, and as many tipſtaffs, coſts one year with another more than four hundred thouſand livres, to the inhabitants of its little juriſdiction; you will eaſily comprehend, why cultivation languiſhes, and why the greater part of the planters, who owe conſtantly more than they are worth, vegetate in miſery, crapulence, and ſloth.

It would be ſuperfluous to ſay any more on this head, unleſs you ſhould think it neceſſary to know that the judges ſit in a ſecular habit, with a ſword by their ſide; and that Themis, in conſideration of the extreme heat of the climate, inſtead of the thick bandage which covers her eyes elſewhere, plays at blindman's-buff here, with a light ſtrip of tranſparent gauze over them. For the reſt, you may

may be aſſured, that in eſtimating the expence of juſtice, I have rather gone below, than above, the truth: for I know more than one tipſtaff here, who has picked up fifty or ſixty thouſand livres, by ſerving warrants, in what thoſe facetious gentlemen are pleaſed to call, *productive years*.

Do not, however, Sir, ſuppoſe me ſo unjuſt as to wiſh to deprive commerce of its due ſhare of influence on the habitual and general wretchedneſs of the colonies. It is an ingenious manœuvre, which does it too much honour to be ſuppreſſed; but which you will not comprehend unleſs I furniſh you with the neceſſary documents. For this purpoſe it will be expedient to look back a little.

" The colonies were eſtabliſhed at the expence " of individuals: the hiſtory of each clearly proves " it." * It was neither then to the foreſight, nor to the policy, nor to the humanity of ſovereigns, that they owed their foundation, and leaſt of all, that of Saint Domingo. It was to accident alone. Some Frenchmen, driven from Saint Kitts by the Spaniards, with other adventurers of their nation, together with a few Engliſh, found themſelves on the weſtern coaſt of St. Domingo, then uninhabited. They eſtabliſhed themſelves there in 1627, and

* *Recherches ſur les Etats-Unis d'Amérique.* Page 118.

were

were the original ſtock of the Flebuſtiers; of thoſe men, whoſe audacity in undertaking, whoſe prodigious courage in executing the moſt difficult enterpriſes, reduce to the level of childrens play, the fabulous exploits of the demi-gods of antiquity; and whoſe ferocity occaſioned one of their chiefs to be called MONBARS the EXTERMINATOR.

Diſguſted with their vagabond and perilous mode of exiſtence, ſome of theſe extraordinary men, of whom the greater part were Engliſh, betook themſelves to the iſle of Tortua *, (which they had made their magazine in 1630, after driving away about five and twenty Spaniards) on the coaſt of Saint Domingo, where they joined themſelves to the Buccaneers, a ſpecies of hunters, whoſe wandering and precarious habits of life, ſerved the Flebuſtiers as an intermediate ſtep in their paſſage from the ſtate of ſailors and ſoldiers, to that of planters.

* At firſt occupied by the Engliſh in 1638, under the command of Willis. A French engineer of the name of Le Vaſſeur drove them out; adopted, with the title of prince, the manners of a tyrant, and was aſſaſſinated by two of his nephews. Tortua then fell under the command of the Chevalier de Fontenay, who reſtored it to the Spaniſh; when a third adventurer, Deſchamps du Rauſſet took it from them again in 1669, and five years afterwards, ſold it to the Weſt India Company. See Labat, *Nouveau Voyage aux Iſles Françoiſes de L'Amérique.* Tom. 5. Chap. 6.

Two

Two things which will always unite men in ſociety cloſer together, the neceſſity of order, and of perpetuating themſelves, determined theſe new inhabitants to aſk for a chief, and for women. The government ſent them at firſt Duparquet, and ſoon after Bertrand d'Ogeron de la Bouére, a gentleman of Angers, who arrived on the ſixth of June 1636. He was ſucceeded by Ducaſſe, and L'Arnage; and the ſelection of theſe men, worthy in every reſpect to command others, proves that governments are not always deceived in the choice of thoſe to whom they delegate a part of their power. "Mild and firm," ſays a modern hiſtorian, ſpeaking of D'Ogeron, "patient and adroit; inſtructed "by misfortune, and the habitude of living with "this ferocious people; cheriſhed by them, and "reſpected by thoſe above him, he was ſtill "ſuperior to the opinion they had formed, I will "not ſay of his virtues, but of his talents."*

The choice of women was leſs difficult to make. France, at that time, abounded with poor, induſtrious, and modeſt females, whoſe ſweet and ingenuous diſpoſitions would have ſoftened, nay, purified the morals of men, rather unformed than corrupted.

* *Hiſtoire Générale de l'Aſie, de l'Afrique et de l'Amérique*, Tome 14.

What, Sir, did they do? They ſent them proſtitutes from the hoſpitals, abandoned wretches raked up from the mud of the capital, diſguſting compounds of filth and impurity of the groſſeſt kind. And it is aſtoniſhing to me, that their manners, as diſſolute as their language, are not perpetuated in their poſterity, to a greater degree than they really appear to be. The conſideration of this event occaſioned a voyager, as ſevere as correct, to ſay, that, " except a few merchants, lately eſtabliſhed " in the colonies, who have brought with them " their wives and children, and a decent and well " regulated ſet of domeſtics, we ſhould do no " injury to the iſlands, in comparing them to " Rome, whoſe founders were a rude rabble of " rogues and whores, headed by two baſtards." *

D'Ogeron had hardly collected together fifteen hundred inhabitants, before the officious Chamber of Commerce, by virtue of its excluſive privilege, that is, its power of ſtarving the colonies †,

* *Journal d'un Voyage aux Indes Orientales.* Tome 3.

† The funds of this company, which undertook the care of the colonies ſo early as 1649, amounted only to forty-five thouſand livres! Now I would aſk, if with ſo inadequate a ſtock, it be permitted to engage for the excluſive ſupply of a colony, unleſs with an expreſs deſign to ruin it? And, indeed, the horrors it occaſioned, ſewed the ſeeds of that hatred which the coloniſts ſtill entertain for the merchants of the mother country.

took

took advantage of the indifference of the miniſter for this infant eſtabliſhment, and offered to furniſh on credit what the other ſhould have freely given; the ſupplies neceſſary to enable them to begin clearing the ground. The intereſt of theſe ſupplies, you may well imagine, was proportioned to the uncertainty and delay of a reimburſement founded intirely on the proſpect of harveſts to come. They came, indeed; but without eaſing the planters: for, while the ambition of extending their cultivation created new wants; the well-grounded hope of ſubjecting the buyer more and more to the ſeller, made the latter extremely ready to credit the former for whatever his neceſſities required.

Soon after the commencement of this traffic, the ſhrewd and dextrous merchant conceived the deſign of adding to the objects of neceſſity, the trifling appendages of luxury, always welcome to Vanity, who "thruſts herſelf into every ſociety." The ſame veſſel that carried out hatchets, and hoeing irons for the men, brought caps for the mothers, and farthingales for the daughters. The youthful Creole was eaſily perſuaded that a looking-glaſs in a gilt frame reflected her pretty features more faithfully than the cryſtal of a fountain. Thus do ingenuous ignorance, and credulous ſelf-love, purchaſe at a hundred times

their value*, ſuperfluities become neceſſaries; while the wily merchant, who has juſt enough of metaphyſics to know that the debtor ſeldom ventures to diſpute with his creditor, fixes what price he pleaſes on the commodities he deigns to take in exchange; and thus acquires what may be truly called, the actual poſſeſſion of the colonies.

To ſtrengthen and ſupport this oppreſſive meaſure, the Chamber of Commerce added three others, yet more ſo.

1°. The right of excluſively ſupplying the colonies.

* I have ſeen a female Creole, who did not want ſenſe, and who was more diſpoſed to dupe others than to be duped herſelf; pay five Portugal pieces, that is, three hundred and thirty livres, for a pair of gold ear-rings which did not weigh thirty! To exculpate themſelves from the reproach of the moſt deteſtable uſury, the merchants will tell you that the uncertainty of commercial ſpeculations, bankruptcies, ſhip-wrecks, poſt-duties, freightage, goods lying on hand, and long credits, do not permit them to bound their profits to the exact ſums authoriſed by law. Be it ſo: but as it is a thing not altogether unknown, for a merchant, favoured by fortune, to amaſs millions, without experiencing any of thoſe accidents, and even, in deſpite of them; I aſk if he be not in conſcience bound to return to each of his purchaſers, the Judaical ſurplus which he has added to the legal price of his wares? If any man has ever known, or heard of ſuch an inſtance of probity, I call on him to name the author.

2°. That

2°. That of being the ſole exporters of their productions.

3°. A law which deprives the planters of the power of manufacturing their own cotton; for the purpoſe of compelling them to buy callicoes at an extravagant rate. Theſe are always of the worſt quality, that they may be the ſooner worn out. For it is not enough to ſell;—it is not enough to ſell dear—No, the man who ſhould content himſelf with theſe trifling advantages would paſs for the dupe of his own honeſty. The true merchant, the merchant, *par excellence*, or who at leaſt, believes himſelf ſo, muſt go farther; he muſt ſell as bad, that he may ſell as often as poſſible. Yes, Sir, the Chamber of Commerce would erect a ſtatue of gold, which ſhould rival in bulk the coloſſus of Rhodes, to the man who ſhould diſcover the happy art of compoſing callico of glaſs, and cloth of china ware!

To ſum up all, Sir, nothing is wanting to put the laſt hand to the theory of its deſpotiſm over the colonies, but to add to the excluſive privilege of ſupplying them with flour, the excluſive privilege of baking their bread, and grinding their coffee.

What

What then, after all, is the true ſtate of the connection between the merchant and the planter? God forbid I ſhould inſinuate that it is ſuch as exiſts between the dupe and the cheat, between the tyrant and the ſlave*!—No, I ſee things in a more favourable point of view.

The Chamber of Commerce is the true proprietor of Saint Domingo: the coloniſts are merely its tenants, preciſely what the Romans uſed to call *Coloni Partiarii*. This is ſo true, and the trader, in particular, is ſo well convinced of it; that the planter who owes nothing, (if there be one of that deſcription†) who pays for every thing with

* See on this ſubject, "*Reflexions ſur la Colonie de Saint Domingo.*" Tom. 1. Chap. 2. pages 36 and 37. "The French trader," adds the author, Chap. 3. page 54, "full at firſt, of zeal and complaiſance, and eager to anticipate the deſires of the planter, by whoſe labour he is enriched; becomes harſh, oppreſſive, and imperious after a little ſucceſs; which, inſtead of redoubling his ardour to oblige, inſpires him with the moſt ridiculous vanity. Preſently he learns to conſider the colony merely as an eſtate, whoſe produce is excluſively deſtined to be put into his hands, at whatever price he may name. Greedy to take advantage of the preſſing wants of the planter, occaſioned either by the ſcarcity of objects of the firſt neceſſity, or by an unfortunate concurrence of circumſtances; he rarely fails to diſcover a diſgraceful and avaricious inflexibility, which converts a uſeful and reſpectable employ into the baſeſt of all profeſſions."

† I muſt be underſtood, to except thoſe great proprietors, who having never ſeen their own eſtates, or the colonies, cannot come under the denomination of planters.

ready

ready money, and who can afford to wait till the number of competitors enables him to demand a reaſonable price for his crops, is looked upon as a noxious animal, which it is the duty of the Chamber to hunt down. For *Meſſieurs* the merchants will tell you, and you may believe them if you pleaſe, that the profit of the exports from the colonies, ſcarcely defraying the expences of the freightage, they can only indemnify themſelves by that of the imports: meanwhile, many a one of them, who carried a pack not twenty years ago, builds a palace, and marries *Mademoiſelle* his daughter to a duke! But ſince our men of wit have turned calculators, and our princes taken to their boſoms the dregs of ſociety; converſation, books, pamphlets, papers, theatres, every thing has been devoted to the praiſes of commerce. "'Tis the corner ſtone of the monarchy! the nur-"ſing-father of the kingdom! the firſt, the moſt "noble, the moſt uſeful of profeſſions!" The ſword of the warrior, the gown of the ſenator, nay, the very ſceptre of the monarch, muſt bow down before the Caduceus of Mercury!

I honour, Sir, an honeſt merchant, as I eſteem every honeſt man; but I confeſs I feel no great inclination to join the general enthuſiaſm, when I conſider this nurſing-father a little more nearly. A few viſits to his counting houſe, will convince the

the moſt incredulous, that the motto of this generous benefactor of the human race, is, like that of too many others, " FIRST MYSELF—THEN THE " PUBLIC."

I will cite a fact which will give you a tolerable idea of the true nature of commerce. Raw ſugar, which in 1682 ſold for fourteen or fifteen livres the quintal, fell in 1713 to five or ſix: and yet this was preciſely the moment the Senegal Company choſe to raiſe the price of ſlaves to an enormous height! Some one has ſaid before me, that " the deſtiny of the colonies is to ſerve for ſport " to the caprice, for nouriſhment to the wants, " for pay to the cupidity of their mother-country, " of its exchequer, its exciſe, its *merchants*, its " companies, and its favourites in power!*

Here is a planter, ſaid I, a few days ſince, to a trading captain; who, at the winding up of your accounts, owes you a conſiderable ſum: how could you find courage to open a freſh account with him? God forbid he ſhould finally ſettle with me, replied the captain! Do you not ſee, that the eaſineſs I appear to be under, with reſpect to what he owes me, ſecures me his next year's crop, and, what is more, ſecures it to me at the price I ſhall

* *Hiſtoire Générale de l'Aſie, de l'Afrique, et de l'Amérique.* Tom. 15.

chuſe

chuſe to put upon it; ſince, by means of ſuch a *trifling* condeſcenſion on his ſide, he is ſure to find on mine a readineſs to credit him for his future wants?—Ah! if you had but a ſpice of the merchant in you, you would ſoon ſee that the profeſſion was rather a mutual intercourſe of good offices, than any thing elſe!!!—And yet, Sir, in ſpite of this benevolence, very good judges will tell you, that to the impolitic and barbarous avidity of the firſt companies of commerce, and among others that known by the name of The Royal Company of Saint Domingo, created in 1698, we ought to attribute the ſtate of languor in which this colony lay, till the final diſſolution of an aſſociation of merchants, which, inveſted with all the prerogatives of ſovereignty, and faithful to the ſpirit of trade, did not forget to comprehend in the calculations of its profits, the ſale of every office, civil and military.

LETTER XI.

Jaquemel, May 1789.

THE length of my laſt, Sir, ſtartles me; but in proportion as I acquire a local knowledge of the country, my materials expand, my obſervations riſe in rapid ſucceſſion, and become ſo connected and interwoven with each other, that they do not always leave me the liberty of finiſhing where I wiſh.

You will not read in any of the voyagers who have written on this iſland, what you will find in my letters. Thoſe who flatter all muſt needs pleaſe ſome; and the greater part ſeem to have taken up the pen more with this view than with any idea of inſtructing. For myſelf—who am not ſufficiently attached to either of theſe motives, to ſacrifice truth to it—I write to tell you what I ſee; what appears to me good, what bad, and what I think might be better. I proceed then as I began.

Taking it for granted that the diſtrict of Jaquemel will one day attain the degree of proſperity, of which it is ſuſceptible; I know nothing ſo eaſy as to render the town the moſt agreeable and ſalutary reſidence on the coaſt.

Already

Already the inhabitants, ſtimulated by this laudable ambition, have procured a church from France; that is to ſay, the materials neceſſary to conſtruct one; this they mean to erect in the centre of a large opening, formed by the meeting of the four principal ſtreets: all that remains to be done on the ſpot, is the foundation, and the carpenter's work.

This erection will probably give you a high opinion of the piety of the coloniſts of our pariſh. Do not, however, be apprehenſive that it will attain the degree of zeal, which conſtitutes fanaticiſm! He who loves to "*wander in unfrequented places,*" may enter the churches of Saint Domingo without fear: he will not find there

"*Les dégrès de l'autel uſés par la prière.*"

Fronting the façade of the temple, there will be an eſplanade, planted with trees, and extended quite to the foot of the mountain; from whence the eye may take in at one view, the bay, the adjacent country, and a wide expanſe of ſea.

The inconvenience of being obliged to fetch water from a river, more than half a mile to the weſt of the town, has given birth to an idea of conſtructing, in the centre of the propoſed eſplanade, a public fountain; to be ſupplied with water from

from the neighbouring mountain, by means of a canal, which can be cut at no great expence.

Such is the project. If it be executed, it will not be with any extraordinary celerity. Good, you know, always travels with the pace of a tortoiſe.—Meanwhile, I ſee no great evil in propoſing another plan, full as uſeful, and leſs coſtly in the execution.

The diſtance of the river obliges the inhabitants to take the negroes from their more profitable labour, to employ them in bringing water, of which a vaſt quantity is conſumed by the baths, ſo neceſſary in a country like this.

The river, or rather the torrent of *Goſſeline*, deſcends rapidly from the ſide of the mountain which looks towards the ſea: at ſome diſtance from Jaquemel it forms an acute angle, and running for a ſhort time parallel to the ſhore, falls into the *great river*, not far from its mouth.

What can be more ſimple than to form a new bed for it, from the place where it turns ſhort round, which ſhall conduct it in a ſtraight line to the port? This operation, to which the nature of the ground oppoſes no obſtacle, would bring water to the door of every houſe, carry off the filth, whoſe corruption infects the air, and form a canal, whoſe borders

ders might be planted with one or more rows of orange trees. Such a plantation would be attended with a double advantage: it would temper the fierceneſs of the atmoſphere, and refreſh the ſight, wearied with the everlaſting proſpect of a ſoil, at once arid, glowing, and duſty.

I can ſee but one objection to this project;—that of its inutility, on the ſuppoſition that the town itſelf may hereafter approach the acclivities of the mountain. To this I reply, that the facility of diſembarking, the proximity of the veſſels, and the deſire of employing as few hands as poſſible, which make it ſo expedient for the captains to have their warehouſes on the ſhore, will always render it neceſſary to have a lower town, which they may call, if they pleaſe, the PORT, the MERCHANT'S QUARTER;—and which, having a freſher air, and a more lively and agreeable aſpect, will be reſorted to by traders in preference to any other ſpot.

As I am now engaged in the career of projects, I cannot, Sir, in my quality of a military man, decently diſpenſe with a few obſervations on the means of defence I think this town poſſeſſed of.—But I muſt firſt point out to you the propriety of making it defenſive.

Saint

Saint Domingo has no ſtrong place on the ſouth. The country, indeed, is difficult; yet with ſecrecy and ſpeed, an active enemy might effect a deſcent on that ſide, and make himſelf maſter of the defiles, and heights of the mountains; he would then be enabled to take Léogane and Port-au-Prince, in the rear, before a ſufficient number of troops could be aſſembled to check his progreſs. Let us ſuppoſe this attack to be ſeconded by a ſquadron, which ſhould block up Port-au-Prince, and menace it on the ſea ſide; and this important place would be immediately cut off from all communication with the neighbouring diſtrict, and from every hope of ſuccour.

It is, then, eſſential to poſſeſs on the ſouthern ſide, a fortified poſt, from whence we may watch the enemy; where our cruiſers may find an aſylum in caſe of neceſſity, and which may ſerve as a rallying point to the troops charged with the defence of the coaſts.

Jaquemel has every thing neceſſary for theſe different objects. The ſweeping line which forms the bay, offers to the eaſt and weſt, moſt excellent poſitions for the conſtruction of batteries, nay, of forts, which might keep up a croſs-fire on the enemy. In the centre of the bottom of the bay, is a ſmall, inſulated eminence, in the form of a parallelogram,

parallelogram, on which ſtand at preſent a church, and a few houſes: this ſpot ſeems deſigned by nature for the erection of a regular fortification, ſince it would admit of the conſtruction of caſemates, and, being neither too high, nor too low, would be very little expoſed to the enemy's fire, while its own would be joined, without obſtacle, to that of the forts in the road. If to theſe means of defence, there were to be added an entrenched camp, for which there are many excellent ſituations, I ſhould conceive this part of the iſland to be perfectly ſecure from every attempt at invaſion.

The rage of riſing into notice by opinions which are ſuppoſed to be new, becauſe they are ſingular, has lately given birth to a military ſect, which, with a conſiderable degree of theory and talents, but no experience, declaims inceſſantly againſt the ſyſtem of ſtrong places! It is natural enough that the deſire of ſeeing its opinions adopted, ſhould incline it to exaggerate the imperfections, and diſſemble the advantages of the ſyſtem it profeſſes to combat.

The true defence of a frontier, ſay theſe ſpeculators, conſiſts in the art of poſitions. Who diſputes it? But if this art can call another to its aid, and if the combination of the two, double the means of reſiſtance, what neceſſity is there to ſepa-

rate

rate them? Ought I to cut off the left hand which parries the ſtrokes of my adverſary, becauſe I attack with the right? Let us not adopt or reject either of the ſyſtems excluſively. It is for circumſtances, and the nature of the ground, to decide whether a frontier ought or ought not to be fortified.

But courage, Sir!—although a ſoldier, I ſhall not carry my military ſpeculations any farther. Without blaming what has been done, I have fallen into a reverie for a moment, on what remains to do for the happineſs and ſafety of this coaſt.

LETTER XII.

Jaquemel,
May 1789.

I HAVE determined, Sir, to give you a deſcription of *one of my days*; it will be the ſimpleſt method of giving you, once for all, a ſummary idea of the manner of living at Saint Domingo, in what is called a town.

When

When the poets of America are about to chant the praiſes of a beauty, freſh, blooming, ruby-complexioned—they muſt be not a little embarraſſed to find compariſons; for here we have no Aurora. A ſingle glance on the terreſtrial globe will explain this phenomenon to you, as well as that of the warmth diſpenſed by the ſtar of night: a warmth ſo ſenſible as to oblige me to pull my hat over my eyes whenever I ſit, or walk by moonlight.—With reſpect to the ſun, he is as much out of the queſtion as Aurora: for what daring mortal, though he had all the ſnow of the Alps upon his head, and all the ice in his heart, could hope to ſuſtain, within a few degrees of the line, a ſingle glance from his "*bel aſtre?*"

Nothing then is left us but the roſe.—What will ſurprize you, perhaps, is, that ſhe is as beautiful, as lively, and as richly tinctured here as in Europe; but, alas! more tranſitory: hence, of all the precepts of that ingenious gallantry which we call love, no one is more religiouſly obſerved here, than "*Youth is brief, haſte to enjoy it.*"

Thus, Sir, no twilight, no loitering dawn, no duſk, no evening ſlowly deepening its ſhades,—all is precipitation; the day ſprings from the night like Pallas from the head of Jove:—it is the *fiat lux* of the creation.—How beautiful an hour is loſt!

And nothing to recompence us for the privation! The cracking of whips, the ſmothered cries, and the indiſtinct groans of the negroes, who never ſee the day break but to curſe it; who are never recalled to a feeling of their exiſtence, but by ſufferings—this, Sir, is what takes place of the crowing of the early cock; and by the ſtrains of this infernal harmony, was I awakened out of my firſt ſleep at Saint Domingo.—I ſtarted, ſcreamed, and fancied that I had waked in the gulph of Tartarus, between Prometheus and Ixion - - - And I was among CHRISTIANS! Among the worſhippers of a God - - - - who died to mitigate the ſorrows of the afflicted!—Cuſtom has already weakened the effect of the impreſſion; it will never obliterate it altogether.

A walk of an hour ſerved to diſſipate the chagrin of this gloomy awaking. I came back in time to ſee a troop of male and female negroes lying againſt the wall, or ſquatting upon their heels, and waiting, amidſt a univerſal yawn, for the maſter's giving the ſignal of going to work, by loud cracks of the *Arceau**, on their back and ſhoulders—for, you will hardly conceive, and indeed it coſt ſix months obſervation to convince me of the truth of it, there are negroes who muſt abſolutely be beaten before

* A kind of ſhort-handled whip, ſo called in the colonies.

they

they can be put in motion. The arceau is the true key of this ſpecies of watch—If I had choſen to take the word of the maſters for it, I ſhould have looked no farther for the cauſe of this ſingular diſpoſition of the ſlaves, than to their natural ſloth and inactivity: but on conſidering the matter a little more narrowly, I fancied I could ſee that theſe diſpoſitions were marvellouſly ſeconded by the inactivity and ſloth of their maſters, who, for the greater part, too ignorant and too unindulgent to comprehend that the vices of education can only be ſubdued by time and patience, find the plan of beating more practicable than that of inſtructing! The natural conſequence of which is, that the negro, once accuſtomed to this mode of treatment, can only be wrought on by rigour and ſeverity. I have perſiſted, month after month, in laviſhing on thoſe who attended me, nothing but patience, gentleneſs, and good offices of every kind ---- all were in vain: the bent was taken, and nothing was left me, after all my endeavours, but the alternative of waiting on myſelf, or of having recourſe to the *arceau*.

They breakfaſt here about eight o'clock: this repaſt is uſually made up of the meat and fruits of the country.

The idle have ſcarcely any other reſource to fill up the interval between breakfaſt and dinner, but

writing, reading, or *ennui:* this is mine. The active employ it in buſineſs, walking, chatting, when they have any thing to converſe on, or in *ennui*.

About noon I go into the bath; immediately after which, I ſit down to dinner. Many people accuſtom themſelves to ſleep after eating: it is no bad method of killing the time which hangs ſo heavy on their hands; but I have not yet adopted it. Nights of twelve hours are ſufficiently long for me. I walk in the gallery, I converſe, when I can find any one to join me, I read, or—I grow ſtupid.

From ſix in the morning to three in the afternoon, the heat would be inſupportable, were it not tempered by the ſea breeze, which blows during the greateſt part of this period. From whence comes it? and why does it blow in the morning from one point of the compaſs, and in the evening from another? Look into the "*Theory of the* "*Winds*" for what the author ſays on the ſubject: for me,—I take refuge in the Theory of Ignorance: ſatisfied with the enjoyment, I ſhall not, while the breeze refreſhes me, fooliſhly inflame my blood by attempting to diſcover whence it comes, and whither it goes. But what, you will ſay, do you mean by the gallery you lately ſpoke of?—This is

to

to call upon me for the plan of a colonial *caſa*, or dwelling-houſe.

A long ſquare, of an arbitrary extent, is divided into three, by two partitions which run the whole length of it; each of theſe diviſions is more or leſs wide, according to the fancy of the proprietor; but the middle one is generally the wideſt. This is left intire; but the two others, are ſubdivided at pleaſure, into two or more chambers. A gallery uſually runs along each front, either open or incloſed with lattice-work, breaſt high. One of the chambers is the eating, the other the drawing room, unleſs the company chooſe to remain in the middle and largeſt diviſion. The galleries of the *caſas* of a certain ſize, terminate in cloſets, of which ſome ſerve for pantries, ſculleries, &c. and others for ſleeping rooms; theſe are commonly appropriated to ſtrangers.

The dread of earthquakes has, for a long time, occaſioned the houſes to be built of only one ſtory: they have now begun to build them of two. The walls are formed of ſquare ſtakes, of an equal thickneſs, covered with planks on the outſide, or with a thin coat of maſon's work. They have a great number of windows, but none of them glazed: the reflexion of the glaſs would render the heat intolerable. Its place is ſupplied by lattices, or canvaſs

vaſs blinds, which break and diminiſh the too powerful glare of day, and which, if they had but the good ſenſe to paint them green, would admit into the rooms a ſoft and refreſhing light - - - but this is what no one has yet thought of. The ſame reaſon, and the violence of the hurricanes, prevent them from covering their roofs with tiles or ſlates: inſtead of theſe, they make uſe of *iſſents*, which are thin planks, cut into the neceſſary ſize.

Such is the houſe of the rich. The reſt have the ſame interior diviſion, but no maſon's work between the ſtakes, no galleries, no cloſets, no lattice work, and what is worſe, no floor. The poor inhabitants tread on the bare ground, which ſwarms with inſects, and ſleep on the roof. They have ſhutters for windows:—wind, ſun, duſt, rain, and innumerable multitudes of ants, penetrate through the chinks, which are purpoſely left to admit the light. When evening comes, every thing is thrown open; then legions of beetles, muſquitoes, and other winged inſects, ruſh into the houſes, attracted by the glare of the candles, which they would inſtantly extinguiſh, if the inhabitants had not the precaution to place them under glaſſes conſtructed for the purpoſe.

If a more enlightened architecture has not yet introduced the art of varying the forms, and multiplying

tiplying the conveniences of the buildings; ſtill leſs muſt you expect to find in the furniſhing of them (I ſpeak of thoſe of the rich) that taſte ſo ſuperior to magnificence. They have all damaſk tapeſtry, and gilt rods! the damaſk tapeſtry appears to me juſt as ſuitable here as a gauze dreſs would be in Norway, in the depth of winter. Taſte, Sir, is ſtill Creolian at Saint Domingo; and, unfortunately, the Creolian is not the right taſte—it ſmells too much of the *Boucan.* *

The kitchens do not join the houſes: the negligence of the negroes would render the junction too dangerous. They are, therefore, removed to a reaſonable diſtance. The majority of the inhabitants of the towns have no kitchen; they kindle a fire, and dreſs their meat in the open air.

The tables are ill furniſhed. Butchers meat is bad; poultry, with the exception of the Pintado, not much better. The pork is excellent, and ſo is the game, which conſiſts of *maroon*, or wild hogs,

* So they originally called the dwellings of the Buccaneers. This ſpecies of men have diſappeared; but the names they impoſed on places remain, as may be ſeen by conſulting the map of Saint Domingo. There you will find numbers of *Boucans*, and of *trous*, (holes) ſuch as *Trou margot*, *Sale-trou*, &c. Theſe low and vulgar denominations ſhew to what kind of men the colony owes it's origin. It is ſtill common to uſe the verb *bouconer* for *rotir*, to roaſt.

and

and of wood pigeons, extremely dear, and extremely difficult to meet with. Sea fiſh does not abound, and is confined to three or four ſorts; freſh water fiſh is ſtill more ſcarce.

You ſee, then, Sir, that Plato could not decently make the ſame reproaches to the coloniſts of Saint Domingo, which he made to the inhabitants of Sicily, "that they ate as if they had not an "hour to live, and built as if they were never to "die."

With reſpect to vegetables, they are better here than in Europe, but not ſo various, nor ſo abundant. The country furniſhes a ſpecies of ſpinage, with which they make thoſe *calaloux*, ſo much vaunted by the Creoles, and which are certainly delicious. To theſe they ſometimes add the buds of pimento, and garlick.

But the moſt delicious of all vegetables is the palm-cabbage. Unfortunately, there is no method of getting at it but by cutting down the tree on which it grows; and this tree, extremely ſlow in coming to maturity, is one of the moſt valuable poſſeſſions of the inhabitants. It is in alluſion to this proceſs, of which ſeveral travellers have ſpoken, without alledging the neceſſity of it, that Monteſquieu compares the deſpot to the ſavage "who

"cu ts

"cuts down the tree to gather the fruit." * You ſee, Sir, how ill the ſimile applies.

The Creoles will never forgive me for paſſing over in ſilence the *ignama*, the *choux-caraibe*, or Indian kale, the *patate*, and above all their dear *banana*. This fruit, of which every voyager has ſpoken, is common to Aſia, Africa, and South America: it is the true manna of theſe three quarters of the globe. The inhabitants of Madeira have not the leaſt doubt but that the banana was the forbidden fruit; and indeed its form bears a ſtriking analogy to that of which the gluttony of Eve made us pay ſo dearly the digeſtion! Hence the libertine muſe of the Ovids of the colony, introduces the banana as often as poſſible, as the object of compariſon, in her amatory couplets; always a little licentious, but full of naïveté and of grace.

This encroachment on the province of maitre d'hotêl muſt have appeared to you, I ſuſpect, a little tedious. I ſhall, therefore, remit you for the deſcription of the ignama, the patate, and the choux-caraibe to the pages of natural hiſtory, and content myſelf with obſerving (what proves theſe three productions not to be natives of St. Domingo, as moſt people imagine) that they are never found

* *De l'Eſprit des Lois.* Liv. 4. Chap. 13.

in the uncultivated parts of the iſland; with the exception of a ſort of wild ignama, by no means common. The ſame obſervation may be applied to the fruits, ſuch as the anana, the ſweet orange, the ſapatilla, &c. The only fruit trees to be found in the woods, are the goyavier, the bitter orange, and the lemon-tree, whoſe fruit, about the ſize of a pigeon's egg, is full of juice.

LETTER XIII.

Jaquemel,
May 1789.

I HAVE divided my day, Sir, into two parts, that it may not appear quite ſo long to you, as to me.

I left, I think, all but myſelf aſleep;—they get up, I quit my book, and we ſpend the reſt of the afternoon as we can until the rays of the ſun, leſs perpendicular, permit us to take advantage of the breeze which rarely fails to riſe about five or ſix o'clock; but not with the degree of exactneſs ſome voyagers

voyagers aſſign it, ſince there are days when it does not blow at all.

This is the time for walking abroad, and above all for viſiting. I undoubtedly prefer the former, becauſe I have more need of uſing my legs than my tongue. Both theſe pleaſures have their inconveniences. The hour for ſtirring out is preciſely that which the muſquitoes chooſe for their evening perambulation. This inſect, which, as the author of the Hiſtory of Louiſiana * gravely remarks, " has acquired a prodigious reputation " throughout America;" gives a decided preference to new comers, whoſe blood, leſs impoveriſhed, is ſuppoſed to yield it a more delicious nouriſhment. This diſtinction, whatever the motive of it may be, is extremely troubleſome to thoſe who are honoured with it, and who cannot, with all their efforts, eſcape from the ſting of the perfidious animal. You muſt be ſeaſoned, that is to ſay, have paſſed ſix months at leaſt, at Saint Domingo, before you can hope to be delivered from this peſt.

Nearly the ſame period muſt elapſe before you can be familiarized to the ſtyle of, what is called Society; eſpecially if you land with the expectation of finding it here, what you left it in Europe. As

* See " *Hiſtoire de la Louiſiane.*" Tome 2. Chap. 4.

all

all are, or pretend to be, planters, it is extremely natural that each ſhould dwell on what intereſts him moſt: ſo that they have ſcarcely ceaſed to ſpeak of their negroes, their cotton, their ſugar, and their coffee, ere they begin anew on their coffee, their ſugar, their cotton, and their negroes!

For a ſtranger, who lands here with a view of acquiring information in the ſuccincteſt way, nothing can be ſo deſirable as theſe eternal converſations: it is not always that the opinions coincide, it may ſometimes happen that both parties are equally wrong; but as the colliſion of two errors frequently elicits ſparks of truth, an attentive liſtener cannot fail to profit by them.

You will readily imagine that each brings to the meeting his proportion of claims: but on what do you ſuppoſe them to be founded? on the extent of his poſſeſſions? on the advantages cultivation has derived from his wiſdom and experience? on the reputation his conduct has obtained him amongſt his neighbours?—No, Sir, on none of theſe, but on the ſpecies of commodity he raiſes! So that the cultivator of coffee, never fails to return to the cultivator of cotton the contempt with which he is heard by the cultivator of ſugar. The *number* of negroes too, has no inconſiderable influence on the degree of conſideration to which it is permitted to aſpire;

aſpire; ſince they reckon by negroes here, as they do by tons of gold in Holland. "He has *one*, *two*, "*three* hundred negroes!"—This is ſaying every thing; the wit of man can add nothing to this eulogium.

The free intercourſe of ſexes, which forms in the old world one of the firſt charms of ſociety, when neither of them uſurps the characteriſtics of the other, adds nothing here to its pleaſures. The European ladies ſeldom ſee the Creoles but to ridicule them, eſpecially when they have not been educated in France; and theſe, in their turn, ſee little in the others but creatures of affectation and folly;—while the men, who ſeldom find, and above all in the former, the degree of *ſenſibility* on which the mulatto ladies pique themſelves, leave both to lament, amongſt themſelves, the decline of the ancient good breeding, and the depravity of the taſtes of our ſex.

The languor which this monotonous mode of exiſtence flings on the commerce of life, is neither relieved by inſtruction, nor by talents, nor even by a love of reading. Several of the coloniſts, to excuſe, in ſome meaſure, their ignorance, have had the diſingenuity to give out, on their return to France, that it is impoſſible to preſerve books in Saint Domingo. We have been ſimple enough to believe

believe them, and our writers have been actively employed in propagating this fooliſh ſtory, as a moſt extraordinary circumſtance. You may truſt me, Sir, when I aſſure you, that the only thing extraordinary in the matter is the facility with which people have given credit to ſo palpable a falſehood!

I have here a variety of books, bound and unbound, which are as free from injury now as they were on the day of my arrival. It is true I took care of them; but this care is neceſſary every where: ſince every where, books, which are careleſsly thrown aſide, and left in the dirty corners of garrets and cock-lofts, a prey to duſt and moiſture, become, as they do here, the food of moths and worms. In fine, the true way to preſerve books here, as well as elſewhere, is to read them. And after all, what kind of books do you ſuppoſe they uſually import? I can aſſure you that "*Margot la Ravadeuſe*," is one of the moſt decent. This will convince you that however neglected theſe productions of filth and obſcenity may be, they are ſtill leſs devoured by worms than their readers by the corruption they engender.

It is uſually after ſun-ſet that thoſe dances take place among the people of colour; dances, in which the females more eſpecially, diſcover ſuch juſtneſs of

of ear, ſuch preciſion of movement, and ſuch volubility of reins, that the quickeſt eye can with difficulty ſeize a few ſhades of the rapid and fugitive developement of their laſcivious graces.

Of theſe dances, which may be truly ſtyled characteriſtic, the *Gragement* and the *Chicca* are the moſt eſteemed: never did voluptuouſneſs in motion ſpread a more ſeducing ſnare for the eager and inſupportable love of pleaſure: - - - Hence, *to dance the chicca*, is conſidered as the ſupreme good; and I confeſs, with no little confuſion, that the auſterity of my principles never prevailed ſo far as to interdict me from the enjoyment of this ſingular ſpectacle, as often as it was in my power.

The orcheſtra is compoſed of one or two fiddlers, much ſuperior for the talents which their occupation requires, to the majority of our European ſcrapers. They have ſtill another advantage over them; that of never being the paſſive inſtruments of the pleaſure of others, for they enter ſo deeply into the ſpirit of the entertainment, that the part of their body which is ſeated, moves in perfect uniſon with the foot that beats the meaſure, and the hand that conducts the bow.

Theſe female mulattoes, who dance ſo exquiſitely, and who have been painted to you in ſuch

ſeducing

ſeducing colours, are the moſt fervent prieſteſſes of the American Venus. They have reduced voluptuouſneſs to a kind of mechanical art, which they have carried to the higheſt point of perfection. In their ſeminaries Aretine himſelf would be a ſimple and modeſt ſcholar!

They are, generally ſpeaking, above the middle ſize, perfectly well formed, and ſo extremely ſupple in their limbs, that they appear as if they had a ſwinging in their gait. They join to the inflamability of nitre, a petulance of deſire, which, in deſpite of every conſideration, inceſſantly urges them to purſue, ſeize, and devour pleaſure, as the flame devours its aliment; while, on every other occaſion, theſe furious Bacchantes who would madly ruſh on the palpitating remains of the wretched Orpheus *, ſcarcely ſeem to have ſtrength enough to drag along their limbs, or articulate their words.

It is from theſe women that the houſekeepers are uſually taken; that is to ſay, the acknowledged miſtreſſes of the greateſt part of the unmarried whites. They have ſome ſkill in the management of a family, ſufficient honeſty to attach themſelves invariably to one man, and great goodneſs of heart.

* See the concluſion of the Fourth Book of the Georgics.

More than one European, abandoned by his ſelfiſh brethren, has found in them all the ſolicitude of the moſt tender, the moſt conſtant, the moſt generous humanity, without being indebted for it to any other ſentiment than benevolence.

Their converſation, when it is not licentious, is inſipid, which is not ſo much their fault as that of the men who frequent them. Suſceptible of delicate feelings, they want nothing perhaps, to be completely amiable, but the degree of inſtruction neceſſary to enable them to turn to the advantage of the genius and the heart, that exceſs of ſenſibility which they abuſe, for want of knowing how to vary its uſe. On this ſubject, however, I wiſh to refer to ſuch as have entered into connections with them, with ſufficient diſcernment to judge—for my own part I freely confeſs, that I do not now ſpeak from experience.

If beauty can exiſt independent of the freſhneſs, the bloom, and the hue of the carnation, there are beautiful mulattoes: and yet it will not be eaſy to find many of them who, to eyes regularly fine, join an expreſſion which renders them ſtill more ſo; if they atone for the want of this perfection, by the delicate whiteneſs of their teeth, what have they to ſupply the deficiency of coral lips, of thoſe charms in detail, of that contraſt of ſhades, which,

from the amiable ſuffuſion that crimſons over the cheek of ingenuous modeſty, to the intereſting paleneſs that betrays the deep ſenſibility of unrequited affection, are an inexhauſtible ſource of beauties!

The female mulattoes are adroit, but indolent: thoſe who join a ſpirit of œconomy to their other talents ſeldom fail of acquiring a fortune. They will employ a whole month in making a ſhirt, but then it will be the perfection of needle-work. They love expenſiveneſs in dreſs; it is a tribute to their beauty: but you muſt not implicitly truſt to the enthuſiaſtic encomiums you will ſometimes hear on their magnificence. Their favourite coiffure is an India handkerchief, which is bound round the head: the advantages they derive from this ſimple ornament are inconceivable; they are the envy and deſpair of the white ladies, who aſpire to imitate them, and who do not ſee that it is impoſſible for ſtrong and glaring colours, calculated to animate the monotonous and livid hue of the mulatto, to harmonize with the alabaſter and the roſes of Europe! They ſhew a taſte ſufficiently correct in the choice of the ſtuffs in which they dreſs, and the trinkets with which they adorn themſelves, and which conſiſt of little more than ear-rings, either gold or enamelled. More nicety and attention to the

the toilet would ill comport with their natural careleſſneſs.

If this portrait ſhould chance to differ from thoſe you have ſeen elſewhere, you will pleaſe to remember, Sir, that I ſketch it on the ſpot, that the model is before my eyes, and that I have neither the talent nor the ambition of amuſing you with pictures of ideal beauties.

I leave this place in a few days, to go and eſtabliſh myſelf in a ſettlement, where I ſhall find a new order of things. My taſte for the country and for ſolitude, makes me impatient for the moment when I may give myſelf up to them entirely. The place I am going to has been hitherto neglected in every point: this will open a vaſt field to my induſtry, and enable me, in ſome meaſure, to correct by experience the theoretical knowledge I have already acquired.

LETTER XIV.

Deſert,
July 1789.

I HAVE been in no great haſte to write to you, Sir, ſince my arrival at the DESERT, ſo I call my preſent habitation. I have therefore ſo many things to ſay to you, that I ſcarcely know where to begin.

We ſet out from Jaquemel: Madame de L ***, her daughter, and her nurſe, in a carriage; one male, three female negroes, and a negro child, on foot, and myſelf on horſeback.

We followed for a league and a half the ſteep and winding valley, through which the torrent which gives name to the quarter of *Goſſeline*, forces its way. This ſpace preſented us now with a few plantations, of which none, a ſingle ſugar one excepted, appeared of any importance; and now with wood ſkirting the mountains ſides, and here and there interrupted by a patch of paſture ground called Savanna.

If this extent of country were as well peopled as it ought to be, and if the proprietors knew only how

how to take advantage of the charming ſituations the ground affords, to place their dwelling houſes, it is certain that even this ſlight combination of art with nature would render the aſpect of the whole extremely lively and agreeable; which is far from being the caſe at preſent.

This negligence may be attributed, in the firſt place, to a want of taſte not uncommon in the country; and, in the ſecond, to a default which I ſcarcely know how to define, but to which it is undoubtedly owing that Saint Domingo, inſtead of citizens, can only boaſt of tranſitory viſitors, who are more intent on providing the means of quitting it, than on furniſhing themſelves with the requiſites for ſpending there an agreeable and happy life.

This default, which, happily, is not that of the other colonies, will for ever render a reſidence in this the more unpleaſant, as the diſagreeable circumſtances of every kind to which the climate and the nature of ſlavery ſubject the inhabitants, are not counterpoiſed by any of the advantages which a mutual and friendly intercourſe procures the inhabitants of every other place. In the ſpot where I reſide, the neighbours hardly know one another: pretenſions either ill-founded or ridiculous; jealouſies of each other's fortune, more ridiculous ſtill; diſputes about boundaries which could not exiſt

exiſt if the ſurveyors, who are moſt extravagantly paid *, underſtood their buſineſs better; and finally, treſpaſſes committed by the negroes, or the cattle, occaſion ſuch a miſunderſtanding, or ſuch a coolneſs, that all reciprocal communication is out of the queſtion. Conſequently, as nothing is ſo ſavage as the recluſe who is not ſo by choice; nor ſo tenacious of his claims as he who is conſcious they are unfounded; you muſt not be ſurpriſed that each owl reſts in his hole, and that ſo little ſociability reigns amongſt men who have few or no ſociable qualities.

It was not ſo heretofore. When a new ſettlement was forming, the diſtance from the ports, the paucity of inhabitants, the pleaſure of ſeeing their countrymen arrive amongſt them, the remembrance of the aſſiſtance they had received from others, formed between thoſe already eſtabliſhed, and thoſe about to eſtabliſh themſelves, a mutual interchange of good offices; this produced a connection, whoſe baſis was laid by want and curioſity, and cemented by habitude.

It was then that far-famed hoſpitality reigned here, which is now vaniſhed, with the cauſes that gave it birth. Things are much changed. In the

* The laying out each Conceſſion coſts about three thouſand livres.

old

old diſtricts, the inhabitants no longer fly to meet the new comer with all the eagerneſs of joy; they no longer receive him with the frank cordiality of former times. Even neighbours rarely meet but by accident. If you are on a journey, you are received, indeed, but no longer with open arms: if you want horſes to proceed, you muſt aſk for them - - - formerly they were offered, they were forced upon you - - - now, pretences are ſought for a refuſal! Your hoſt will be " *very glad* " to ſee you arrive, but he will be " *quite charmed* " to ſee you depart.

I have pointed out to you, Sir, one of the cauſes of this revolution; the others may be eaſily divined, when you conſider how much the manners are influenced by riches, and how rare it is to find a man who can feel for wants which he does not himſelf experience.

This digreſſion has led me out of my way; it is time to return to it.

When we had arrived at the foot of the mountains, we found the road impaſſable for carriages: Madame de L * * * was therefore obliged to alight, and get on horſeback; and the negro women carried the children by turns.

Theſe

Theſe mountains have no very flattering appearance: wherever they are not covered with wood, their abrupt acclivities preſent a barren ſurface of greyiſh turf, or ſand ſtone; a certain proof, they tell me, that there is gold below - - - - thus, this deſtructive metal impoveriſhes the earth which conceals it! the ſign of our wealth is diſtinguiſhed by ſterility! and the ſtrong box of nature reſembles that of the miſer! *

This forbidding tone of colour, joined to the confuſed and fantaſtic manner in which theſe incoherent maſſes are thrown together, gives them an air of decrepitude and decay, which preſents the painful image of univerſal diſorder and deſolation. This part of the new world has ſuch an antiquated appearance, that I ſhould not heſitate, if I could

* It is not a little extraordinary to ſee the author of ſuch a work as the *Etudes de la Nature*, labouring to deprive Saint Domingo of the wretched advantage of containing gold mines. "The whole truth is," ſays he (Tome 2. p. 244) that when "Columbus diſcovered the Antilles he found the natives poſſeſſed "of ſome pieces of this metal in a very impure ſtate; theſe they "had obtained in the way of barter from the inhabitants of the "continent, for there were no mines on the iſlands." If M. de Saint Pierre will deign to look a little into their hiſtory, he will find that in Saint Domingo alone, the mines of Cibao have furniſhed more gold than Europe at preſent has in circulation. How can we ſuppoſe, then, that people who had ſuch rich mines at home, and who, at the time they were diſcovered, were not poſſeſſed of the moſt paltry boat, ſhould go, and traffic for gold on the continent?

once

once adopt the ſyſtem of Thales, to aſſert that St. Domingo preceded, by ſome ages, the other productions of the ocean.

From the foot of the mountain to the *Deſert*, the diſtance is about three miles: theſe we paſſed, by creeping along its ſinuoſities, in a narrow path, or track, ill laid out, and worſe kept; which ſometimes brought us to the extreme verge of a precipice, and ſometimes more fortunately to a ſheltered ſpot, where our panting caravan might take breath.

The firſt view of the Deſert did not quite tranſport us. - - - A ſlope for drying coffee, a huſk, or pulping-mill, a large caſa in ruins, two ſmall ones, one intended for the kitchen, the other for the reſidence of the overſeer, in the ſame condition: a lime-kiln, ſomething that was once a garden, a pigeon houſe tottering on four ſtakes; the whole jumbled together, without choice, without order, without combination in a tunnel, from whence the eye could catch but one view! Such, Sir, is the portrait of our abode, drawn from nature: add to it a dozen negro huts perched on the ſharp ridge of one of the jutting eminences of the mountain, and the picture will be complete.

We found the ground floor of the large caſa (of which you already know the plan) ſo undermined by

by rats, that we ſunk to the knees at every ſtep: it was neceſſary to unpave it and fill up the abyſs with freſh earth. Madam de L * * *, accuſtomed to the elegant accommodations of Paris, although previouſly informed of the condition in which ſhe would find her *country ſeat*, had ſome difficulty to ſuppreſs her tears at the view of the kind of Thebaïd ſhe was about to inhabit. "Be of good "heart," ſaid I to her; "I have not the wand of "Armida; but with trees, water, labour, and the "vegetation of Saint Domingo, if I do not change "the Deſert into an elyſium, I will at leaſt engage "to render it ſupportable."

A fault, common to all who begin a ſettlement, is the cutting down of every tree within two hundred yards of their eſtabliſhment; which is thus expoſed to the double action of the ſun, and the reverberations of a ſoil, which, ſtripped of all its ſhade, ſends forth a warmth, equal to that of the mouth of an heated oven.

This blundering method of proceeding is juſtified, like every other abſurdity, by falſe or inconcluſive reaſons. The planters ſay that the great difficulty of tranſporting building materials makes it neceſſary to uſe ſuch as are on the ſpot; that the ravages of hurricanes would render the vicinity of trees dangerous, &c. You ſee clearly, Sir, that the

the firſt of theſe reaſons is merely an apology for their indolence and want of foreſight; the ſecond, for their ſtupidity; ſince, to preſerve the buildings from danger by the fall of trees, nothing more would be neceſſary than to take their elevation, and meaſure on the ground the diſtance at which they might be ſuffered to remain with ſafety.

On the day of my arrival, I obſerved with ſingular ſatisfaction, that a moſt beautiful avocatier * had eſcaped the ax of the barbarians, preciſely on the ſpot which the nature of the ground, and the neighbourhood of water, ſtrongly marked out for embelliſhment. The next morning, the firſt object that ſtruck me on opening my eyes, was the avocatier ſtretched at its length in the duſt! I flew to announce this enormity to the overſeer - - - it was himſelf who had committed it! This charming tree had been cut down for railing, to encloſe a few goats - - - - and within two hundred paces of the ſpot, there was timber enough to conſtruct a royal navy!

I give you this anecdote as a proof of what I have juſt aſſerted.

* See a deſcription of this tree and its fruit in the "*Nouveau* "*Voyage aux Iſles Françoiſes de l'Amérique.*" Tome 1. Chap. 14.

We

We had ſent before us a large quantity of poultry of every kind; at our arrival almoſt all was gone! The turkeys, which the Jeſuits ſeem only to have domeſticated for themſelves, had again run wild; the hens, abandoned to their inſtinct, were diſperſed about the coffee plantations, where they laid their eggs, brooded and rooſted: and where their eggs, their chickens, and themſelves became the prey of rats, ſnakes, and negroes. The ducks ſhared the ſame fate.

When I expoſtulated with the overſeer on his negligence, he replied, that he had done nothing but what was cuſtomary, and that the looking after poultry would *interrupt* the negroes, that is, take them off from more eſſential occupations. I told him that we ought to correct a bad cuſtom by a good one; that the preſent was calculated to ſtarve us; that the moſt eſſential part of the negroes occupation was to enable us to live, before we thought of enriching ourſelves, &c.

Full of this perſuaſion, I immediately ſet myſelf to remedy the diſorder. I patched up an old hen-rooſt, collected all the poultry I could during the night, and ſhut them up in it for ſome days. Our ſtock is already conſiderably increaſed: the hens, who lay without intermiſſion, ſit two or three times a year; and we have eggs and pullets in abundance.

The

The overſeer begins to acknowledge that I was right; and I can read in the ſatisfied air of the cocks, that they think themſelves obliged to me for having eſtabliſhed order and good government in their ſeraglio.

With reſpect to the *élèves* of the Society of Jeſus —by a refinement in delicacy, of which you will ſcarcely believe me capable, I have left them in the woods, becauſe a ſtate of nature mightily improves the flavour of their fleſh. When we are in want of game, I take my gun, go into the coverts, and bring home a turkey, juſt as a ſportſman, with you, does a ſnipe, or a woodcock.

The ſight of the dove-houſe, though in a ſtate of actual decay, immediately rekindled my ancient paſſion for that branch of rural œconomy. I flew to the aſſiſtance of the friends of my youth; laviſhed on them all the care which the neatneſs and ſalubrity of their dwelling ſeemed to demand, and gave myſelf up to the employ, with all the intereſt attached to an amuſement that recalled the memory of ſcenes moſt dear to my heart.

LETTER XV.

Deſert,
Auguſt 1789.

IF my own feelings could dictate a thought which might not accord with your happineſs, I ſhould have been tempted, Sir, to have wiſhed you here at the reception of your packet, that you might have been a witneſs of the joy it occaſioned. The day of its arrival was ſolemnized as a feſtival; the negroes were diſmiſſed from work, regaled with ſalt meat, and brandy, and permitted to dance a *Calenda*—without ever ſuſpecting that it was to a letter from Paris they owed all this indulgence. Let them dance on! while I, to ſatisfy your curioſity, employ the day in bringing you acquainted with them.

You do not venture to reproach me for not having already done it, and you are right: many a man has ſuppoſed that a reſidence of ſome months was ſufficient to know them, and has in conſequence of it, undertaken to draw their portrait with a degree of aſſurance that has even impoſed on thoſe who have lived whole years in the midſt of this ſpecies of men—lived, it muſt be confeſſed, as a wood-cutter in the midſt of a foreſt; without ſeeing any thing

thing but wood in the different ſpecies of trees which compoſe it!

The leaſt precipitate and raſh of thoſe painters, however, have diſtinguiſhed the African negro from the Creole; and this diſtinction, abſolutely neceſſary, is certainly ſome proof of judgment.

My buſineſs will be with the firſt. He is the true negro: the other is but the black and miſchievous ape of his maſter; whoſe vices alone he copies. A ſlave—what has he to do with the virtues of a man?

"Abominable Chriſtians!" cries Voltaire, "the "negroes you ſell for twelve hundred livres a-"piece, are worth twelve hundred times as much "as yourſelves!" *

If this is not the only exaggeration, it is beyond doubt the moſt extravagant of all thoſe we owe to the bilious humanity of this great but miſchievous man.

The negro, Sir, is much more difficult to define than you would ſuppoſe. To do it well we ſhould ſtudy him in the different periods of his life; we

* *Oeuvres Complettes. Tome* 58. *Lettre* 124.

ſhould

ſhould know if he was, in Africa, free, or enſlaved, rich or poor, hunter, huſbandman, fiſher, paſtor, prieſt, artiſt or warrior.

We ſhould ſee him in his native ſoil, in his own houſe: follow him into the habitudes of his private life, into the boſom of his family, under the influence of the government, the laws, the religion, the prejudices of his country; we ſhould make ourſelves acquainted with his ſocial dependencies, his taſtes, his regimen, his employments, his pleaſures, and his pains.

We ſhould then compare his preſent ſtate with his paſt; obſerve the influence of tranſplantation on his temperament, on his ideas, on his humour, and on the degree of ſenſibility of which he is ſuſceptible.

Even this is not enough: we ſhould diſtinguiſh what belongs to the ſpecies in general, from the particular character of the individual; and examine whether he has left in his own country a father, mother, wife, children, friends; we ſhould narrowly ſearch into the impreſſion which the certitude of being torn for ever from all that was dear to him may have made upon his mind; and, added to all this, Sir, if we wiſh to judge with any tolerable degree of accuracy, we muſt abſolutely ſepa-

rate

rate the man of circumſtances, from the man of nature and education.

This is no eaſy taſk: I doubt whether it was ever yet performed; and I am certain it never will by me, who ſuſpect that I have already undertaken a work above my ſtrength, in merely hazarding this ſimple outline.

One thing which clearly proves the negro to be no better known to his panegyriſts than his detractors, is the irreconcileable difference of their opinions. He is conſtantly with one, every thing he is not with the other. It is ſufficient for one to refuſe him a quality or a virtue, for the other to grant it to him. The planters who live with the negroes without giving themſelves the trouble of conſidering them, are much better acquainted with them than he who defines them ſo boldly; becauſe they do not, like him, judge of the whole from a few exceptions. Be under no apprehenſions that they will buy a *Mondongo* for a *Senegaleſe*, or an *Ibbo* for an *Arrada*.

The negro, juſt like ourſelves, is good or bad, with all the different ſhades that modify the two extremes. His paſſions are thoſe of uninformed nature: he is libidinous without love, and gluttonous without delicacy. Woman for him is merely

an inſtrument of pleaſure. When he is hungry, it is a matter of indifference to him whether he eats a piece of carrion, or a pullet, a frog or a pintado *. He is indolent becauſe he has few of the wants which labour is calculated to ſatisfy; and becauſe he either cannot, or will not, conceive the neceſſity of labouring for us; nor the juſtice of doing it without any other retribution than blows and ſtripes.

He loves repoſe, not for the ſake of enjoying it as we do, nor for the opportunity of finding in tranquillity the moral fruition which a ſtate of phyſical activity had deprived him of; but for the ſake of doing nothing—for to do nothing has ever been the ruling paſſion of all the people of the torrid zone §.

* The ſavages of North America are not much more delicate in their taſtes. "I have ſeen them," ſays Le Beau, "collect "the putrid dogs and cats which lay in the ſtreet. One day, in "particular, I ſaw a Huron take up a hog which had died of "diſeaſe, and already begun to infect the air with its ſtench, "and carry it away on his ſhoulder. They ſwallow frogs whole; "dry the entrails of deer without cleaning, and find them as de-"licious as we do thoſe of the woodcock."

Aventures du Sieur Le Beau. Tome 2. Chap. 29.

§ And I might add, of ſlaves in every climate. The Ruſſian peaſantry, for example, commonly paſs their feſtivals in their ſtoves, or lying before the doors of their houſes: idleneſs being for them a kind of pleaſure equal to the moſt rapturous enjoyment. See *Chappes d'Auteroche. Voyage en Sibérie.* Tome 1. Page 316.

He

He neither troubles himſelf with forming or breaking, without knowing why, thoſe inſignificant connections which have no other object or pledge of continuance, than the intereſt or convenience of the moment.

He neither loves nor hates habitually; but when he does either the one or the other, it is with fury. Some of them have by turns, the grovelling and vain, the ſupple and inflexible, the ferocious and timid character of the deſpot and the ſlave. They brood over their vengeance, or ſuffer it to exhale in threats; but would you ſee theſe hurlers of thunderbolts at your feet?—ſhew them the point of a needle.

Generally ſpeaking, the negroes are neither falſe nor perfidious: ſometimes you will find a knave among them, who was probably in Africa a phyſician, a ſorcerer, or a prieſt—ſuch a man is extremely dangerous.

To manage them properly, we ſhould impoſe on them the ſimpleſt duties, the cleareſt laws; and exact the performance of them with rigour, though with a ſtrict regard to juſtice: for indulgence, in their eyes, is weakneſs; and injuſtice a defect of judgment, which excites their hatred, or their contempt. I have made many trials, and the re-

ſult has perfectly convinced me of the accuracy of this obſervation.

Whether it be that they have falſe or confuſed ideas on the nature of *meum* and *tuum*; that the abſolute want of property makes them careleſs or ignorant of its rights; or that they ſuppoſe a ſtate of ſlavery brings them back again to a ſtate of nature, where all things are in common, I know not—but ſo it is, that the greateſt part of the negroes are thieves.

Like all men whoſe religion is confined to a few ſuperſtitious practices, they have no idea of a conventional morality. Whatever good qualities a negro has, he derives from nature. The culpable negligence of the inhabitants in giving them ſome inſight into the ſimple and fundamental principles of Chriſtianity, allows them to live, grow old, and die in their native ignorance. When a ſufficient number of them are collected, they are led to church, without knowing whither they are going; baptized, without comprehending what has been done to them, and behold, they are Chriſtians*!

The

* This may appear ſuſpicious in the mouth of a profane, like myſelf: it will therefore be more curious, and more ſatisfactory to hear the report of a celebrated miſſionary. "When I am told "of any ſlaves newly arrived in my diſtrict," ſays Labat, "I "go

The only circumſtance they can collect from the ceremony, is that they have changed their name: the negro *Mazimbo* is told that he muſt be henceforth called *Euſtace*; his organs accuſtomed to chaunt a ſoft and harmonious language, cannot accommodate themſelves to the pronunciation of this barbarous word; he forgets it as faſt as it is repeated, and diſtreſſes himſelf, poor wretch! at being no longer called by the name which his mother gave him. I have taken notice that the negroes, when together, never make uſe of their baptiſmal name: and, in ſpite of the kind of pride which they derive, as I have been told, from the honour of being Chriſtians, it has frequently ſtruck me, that thoſe who affect to attach any value to it, do it more with a view to flatter their maſters than from any other motive.

" go to ſee them, and I begin by making them make the ſign of " the croſs, guiding their hand myſelf: after this, I make it my- " ſelf upon their forehead, by way of taking poſſeſſion of them " in the name of Jeſus Chriſt and of his church. The negro who " comprehends nothing of what I ſay or do, ſtares at me with the " utmoſt aſtoniſhment."

The miſſionary confeſſes afterwards, " that the negroes *under-* " *ſtand no more what they are taught than a parrot*—and that this " conſideration would raiſe ſome ſcruples in his mind, if it were " not for the words of rhe Pſalmiſt, *Homines et jumenta, ſalvabis* " *Domine, Thou, Lord, ſhalt ſave both man and beaſt!!!*"

You

You will eaſily conceive, Sir, that the negro troubles himſelf very little about the future. What advantage could he derive from it? Hence his foreſight rarely extends beyond the preſent moment: it is only by dint of time and perſeverance, that he can be brought to believe it is for his intereſt to cultivate his garden; and to preſerve, for the night, the covering which he flings aſide during the day.

What appears ſingular, and indeed contradictory is, that, ſenſible to pleaſure, even to madneſs, he ſupports with a degree of calmneſs, bordering on inſenſibility, the moſt excruciating pains. The preparations for chaſtiſing him, ſeem to affect him more than the chaſtiſement itſelf. The negro ſings while he dances—while at work—while dying.* *We* brave death, *he* laughs at it. When his

* The Europeans, and ſtill more the coloniſts, are taught to believe that this cuſtom of ſinging in death is peculiar to the negroes: travellers, however, tell us the ſame of the natives of the two Americas. They do more: an Onontague aged an hundred, taken by a party of ſavages under the command of the Count de Frontenac, bore the torments they inflicted on him with a courage, a ſererity of mind, worthy - - - of an Iroquois. A ſavage, tired out with his harangues, gave him ſeveral ſtabs with a knife. "I "thank thee," ſaid the Onontague, "but thou ſhouldſt have per- "mitted me to periſh by fire. Frenchmen, learn of me to ſuffer: "and you, Indians! remember how you ought to behave when "you find yourſelves in my ſituation!"

Hiſtoire de l'Amérique Septentrionale. Tome 3. Lettre 7.

his companion expires, he does not ſay, *he is dead:* ſuch a phraſe would convey no meaning to his mind; but, *he is gone away, he is departed.* This manner of expreſſing himſelf, ſeems to indicate a perſuaſion that after death he returns into his own country; a prejudice which has determined more than one negro to deſtroy himſelf, that he might arrive there the ſooner—What would this man be, if to his indifference for life, he joined the virtues which a contempt of death uſually ſuppoſes!

After having paſſed a certain age, the negroes appear to pay no great attention to the ties of conſanguinity. Some time ſince, it happened that a father, after a long ſeparation, diſcovered his ſon in a work-ſhop under my own inſpection. This unforeſeen interview did not produce, on either ſide, the ſmalleſt ſurprize or emotion: the father and the ſon met like two travellers who recollect they have ſomewhere ſeen each other before.

We find among the negroes good and bad. Diſpoſitions more or leſs favourable, render them more or leſs proper to receive a certain degree of poliſh and inſtruction. The example of the Creole negro, capable of acquiring every talent, every virtue, when he finds in his maſter a proper model to follow, proves that the inferiority of the Africans is, in many reſpects, the fault of their education. It

is

is then carrying the principle too far, to ſay with Ariſtotle, that ſlavery excludes every kind of virtue; and 'tis ſurely an abuſe of the faculty of reaſoning, to pretend to diſcover in the ſlight phyſical difference between the negro and the white, an obſtacle that muſt for ever prevent the former from attaining the degree of intelligence and perfection, of which the latter is ſuſceptible.

I promiſed you, Sir, nothing but a haſty and imperfect ſketch; I have kept my word. You will find that my negro, delineated from the naked figure, and with the moſt ſcrupulous fidelity, differs in many points from the negro whom writers of celebrity have decorated with all the charms of their eloquence. Theſe gentlemen, from the bottom of their ſtage have brought forward for the admiration of Europe, a negro * whom they never ſaw but with the eyes of the imagination—a dramatic perſonage; while I ſhew you the negro of nature and of the colonies.

* See the Romance in three volumes called "The Negro "equalled by few Whites." The author had no need to ſay in his preface that he had never lived among the negroes, nor inhabited the colonies. His work, extremely intereſting in other reſpects, abounds with errors and abſurdities, which prove that he knows the negroes, as he does the regimen, the manners, and the cuſtoms of the coloniſts, merely by hearſay.

LET-

LETTER XVI.

Deſert,
September 1789.

EVERY thing, Sir, has its inconveniences; even thoſe which ought to be leaſt ſubject to them. In this liſt, I place the indulgence with which you have read ſuch of my letters as had arrived before yours were ſent off; for it has emboldened me to communicate the continuation of my obſervations to you, with the ſame confidence, the ſame unreſervedneſs, which conſtitutes, in fact, their only merit.

If they do not intereſt, they will at leaſt ſerve to divert you, at a moment when France is become a kind of amphitheatre, in which twelve hundred legiſlators, ſeconded by twelve hundred thouſand politicians, proclaim each, with a loud and audible voice, the principles on which he pretends the government, and the liberty of his country muſt from hence be founded.

Do you recollect the time when, from the extremity of Africa, I troubled you with a few ideas relative to theſe ſublime ſpeculations? what has been the reſult of this ungrateful and ſeducing employ?—

ploy?—that, of all the miſſions to which a reaſonable being can poſſibly be deſtined, the moſt difficult, the moſt dangerous, and at the ſame time, the moſt uſeleſs, is that of giving reaſon to fools, in other words, wiſe laws to men.

I have therefore renounced, and I think for ever, the idea of diving into the myſteries of legiſlation; becauſe every thing confirms me in the opinion, that it is with us, as with animals, who muſt never be indiſcriminately ſubjected to an excluſive regimen: and I ſay again, with the ſage of old, "I "had rather play with children, than govern men "in a ſtate of corruption."

In my quality of gardener, however, I will juſt obſerve — take care that you do not carry away the earth with the roots of the plants you propoſe to extirpate: you will run the riſk of being obliged to ſow your new laws on the barren ſand, or the arid gravel-ſtone: and as a traveller, I will add — 'tis not enough to have beautiful theories; it is neceſſary that long experience ſhould have matured a great variety of obſervations, to enable you to be certain that you do not deceive yourſelves in the application of principles, ſeducing in proportion as they are new, and dangerous in proportion as they are abſtracted. Remember that the man the moſt celebrated for the extent of his acquire-

ments,

ments, and the profundity of his metaphyſics, that Locke, appointed to form a code of laws for Carolina, produced a plan of legiſlation as impracticable as it was ridiculous! Above all things, be perſuaded that you do the human race a moſt dangerous honour, when you ſuppoſe it ſufficiently reaſonable, or ſufficiently wiſe, to be able to diſpenſe with the neceſſity of being governed any longer like a fool, or an infant.

I have done—And now, Sir, for my farm. If you diſlike the minutiæ of a country life, treat them as I formerly uſed to do the pages of morality which I found in my romances; ſkip them over, and paſs to ſomething more entertaining.

We have three cows here, which yield milk of an excellent quality, and in ſuch abundance, that we can ſpare enough from our daily conſumption to make a little butter and cheeſe.

But how can you make butter and cheeſe without churns and without moulds? Juſt as Robinſon Cruſoe made cloaths without needles and without thread.

The proceſs for making butter is ſimple enough: the cream is agitated in a glaſs jug, till the unctuous part is ſeparated from the fluid; it is then rinced twice

twice or thrice in cold water; by which time it has acquired conſiſtence enough to be formed into a maſs.

The making of cheeſe was rather more difficult, for want of a mould, either of earthen-ware, or of ruſhes. I ſupplied the place of it, as well as I could, by a canvaſs bag, whoſe top and bottom I kept open by the aſſiſtance of two hoops, ſupported by two croſs ſticks.

The nature of the ground, and the ſuperabundance of paſturage, made me deſirous of adding a few goats to my cows: and I was already pleaſing myſelf with the idea of ſeeing them run in the woods, ſkip from precipice to precipice, get entangled in the long filaments of the *liane*, and extricate themſelves by ſuſpending the tufts of its brilliant flowers on their long horns; but the conſideration that nothing would prevent their roving through the coffee plantations, and committing the moſt terrible ravages, obliged me to abandon all thoughts of them. How many pleaſures does this cruel intereſt annihilate!

I had brought with me a ſufficient quantity of the ſeeds of vegetables and flowers to ſow all the garden—but two operations were previouſly neceſſary; to give the ground the regular form which every

every kitchen garden ſeems to demand, and to break and pulverize the ſoil, much too compact and rich for the kind of productions to which it was deſtined. As I had no tools with me but ſhovels and hoes, I was not long in perceiving that the moſt neceſſary were yet wanting; in particular, that which is to the cultivation of a garden what the comb is to the toilet of a fine lady; I mean a rake: and I ſucceeded, not without execrating an hundred times the detractors of Emilius' education, in fabricating a couple, which though not *chef d'oeuvres* of workmanſhip, were not for that the leſs uſeful.

Almoſt every thing ſucceeded beyond my hopes. Pulſe, hitherto unknown in Saint Domingo, took root, and ſhot up ſurpriſingly; as did ſorrel, parſley, wild thyme, and creſſes. We had green peas almoſt all the year. Flowers, till then unſeen in theſe regions of fire; the narciſſus, the hyacinth, the rezeda, nay the humble violet, embelliſhed and perfumed the edges of my beds. Inſtead of the box, which borders with its gloomy verdure the flower-plats with you, we make uſe of the ippecacuana, whoſe ſtalks, of a moſt beautiful green, do not ſerve for an aſylum to the deſtructive race of inſects.

It is true that this rapid vegetation, which enables you to ſee, as it were, the progreſs of your plants, is not without its inconveniences: for, not allowing the ſeed time to ripen, it obliges you to be conſtantly ſowing: it is equally true, that all my endeavours to ſave the flowers of the melon and the vine from the ravages of the ants have been ineffectual—I muſt obſerve, however, that this peſt is merely local; for Saint Domingo produces during the greateſt part of the year, very tolerable grapes, and delicious melons. I do not know whether it be true, but I have been told that vines muſt only be cultivated here in treilage; that if an inhabitant preſumes to plant a few in his grounds, the Chamber of Commerce has a right to pull them up, and that the coloniſts are conſequently reduced to drink wine, which the merchant may boldly pronounce of his *own growth*, ſince, if it eſcapes adulteration in the magazines of France, it is ſeldom but that the ſame quantity of common Anjou wine, which ſets out from thence in two tuns, arrives here in three, under the juſtly celebrated name of Bourdeaux. *

Artichokes

* The rage of acquiring information in my voyages, which puſhes me wherever any thing is in hand, enabled me to diſcover that the miracle of the multiplication of wine is not performed at ſea preciſely as it was at the marriage of Cana. It is commonly in the hold of the ſhip that the captain, ſeconded by a few truſty hands, proceeds to this operation. A briſk wind, or a ſtorm, is generally

Artichokes grow here in great perfection, and to a larger ſize than in France; eſpecially when care is taken to give them an elevated ſituation, with a northern aſpect. Aſparagus requires leſs pains, and is ſooner fit for cutting here than elſewhere. I tried potatoes, but they proved unproductive, although I choſe for them the light ſoil which they love—but I attribute this misfortune to their having been neglected.

The patate is more nutritive, replied the planters, when I propoſed the cultivation of the potatoe. That is to ſay, Sir, the patate, eſpecially the yellow one, being more ſtringy, and fatty, lies heavier on the ſtomach, and is more difficult of digeſtion. I believe, however, that the potatoe is infinitely more wholeſome: if it be leſs nutritive, ſupply the quality by the quantity. The only advantage which the patate has over the potatoe, ſeems to be an agreeable perfume, which will always plead moſt powerfully in its favour.

The European grains which have ſucceeded beſt at Saint Domingo, are the mil, or millet, and the

generally choſen, when all the crew are ſuppoſed to be at their ſeveral poſts: for the myſteries of Bacchus, like thoſe of the Bona Dea, can only be celebrated at a diſtance from the eyes of the profane.

maize,

maize *, which you are better acquainted with, perhaps, under the name of Turkey wheat. It is here of an extraordinary ſize and beauty, and is eaten in the ear, before it comes to maturity, roaſted under the aſhes: it is alſo eaten boiled in milk, or water; and in both caſes is an excellent food.

The cattle are kept on the leaves and ſtalks of the patate, on green millet, Guinea graſs, and the tops of the ſugar cane, which ſhould be placed in the firſt rank, for the peculiar quality they have of fattening ſuch animals as are fed on them. The ſoft and pleaſing verdure of the ſpots which are conſecrated to the production of the two laſt articles, forms a moſt lovely contraſt with the darker green of the woods, and, above all, of the coffee plantations.

What think you of all this, Sir? Do you not fancy you have been reading a chapter of the "*Maiſon Ruſtique?*" I have formerly heard Rouſſeau reproached for his *bad taſte*, in entering into the details of the rural and domeſtic œconomy of the

* This muſt have been one of the firſt grains which the Europeans introduced into the Antilles; for in 1522, Cortez ſaid that "maize made on the continent of America, much better bread "than in the iſlands." *Correſpondence de Fernand Cortez avec L'Empereur Charles* V. Lettre 2.

houſe

houſe of Clarens. What would theſe critics ſay of my letter? And yet, how could you become acquainted with Saint Domingo, if, like ſo many others, I had confined myſelf to the mere objects of polity and commerce; and, adding to the prodigious number of falſe ideas already formed of this colony, given you exceptions for general rules, and the plan of the habitation of ſome great ſugar planter for the model of all the reſt?—Would to Heaven, the abode of all thoſe wealthy wretches reſembled the Deſert! they would not then be inceſſantly agitated between the ambition of appearing what they are not, and the difficulty of maintaining the abſurd ſtate they affect to diſplay, with inadequate reſources!

People imagine in Europe that the colony is only inhabited by men overflowing with riches; wholly occupied with the care of employing their immenſe wealth in diverſifying and multiplying their pleaſures. Believe me, Sir, there is no country where the fortunes of individuals are leſs ſolid, and where the anxiety of ſecuring them from the viciſſitudes of chance, ſo effectually trouble the enjoyments they might otherwiſe produce. In no part of the world are *riches* and *happineſs* leſs ſynonimous than at Saint Domingo.

LETTER XVII.

Defert,
September 1789.

A PREJUDICE not uncommon in Europe, amongſt your half-informed writers is, that rice can only be cultivated with ſucceſs in grounds capable of being overflowed *. If you tell a Frenchman that this grain grows here on the higheſt mountains, he will laugh in your face, becauſe his little reading has not informed him that it grows in the ſame manner in Louiſiana. †

The pomgranate and the fig-tree were naturalized here without difficulty; as were the Albergine and the Taumate of the ſouthern countries. But all theſe little articles of innocent luxury are neglected by nine tenths of the inhabitants in a moſt inconceivable manner. It is but ſeldom that even the orange tree receives the degree of attention neceſſary to prevent it from degenerating: and yet

* See on this ſubject the *Voyage aux Indes Occidentales*, par Groſe, Chap. 5. alſo the *Journal du Voyage de Siam*, Page 230 and 273.

† *Hiſtoire de la Louiſiane.* Tome 1. Chap. 13.

nothing

nothing would be more eaſy than to procure ſeeds from Malta, or plants from Portugal; to propagate theſe two ſpecies here to the excluſion of all the others, and to have at the Antilles the golden apple of the Heſperides.

This long, but imperfect enumeration of the plants new to the ſoil of Saint Domingo, will probably induce you to aſk a very obvious queſtion—what did this iſland produce then before the arrival of the Europeans? Nothing, Sir, or next to nothing. I ſtrive to diſcover what could have been the principal food of the natives, and I can only find in the animal kingdom, caymans, or alligators, by no means plentiful; tourlouroux, or land crabs, lizards, and a few birds — for even the rats, ſo numerous here at preſent *, were introduced from Europe.

The vegetable kingdom offered no reſources but a few herbs, roots, and berries, (with the exception of the ananas, and the ſapatilla, whoſe ſweetneſs, extremely cloying, ſurpaſſes any thing known in Europe, but which I do not believe, any more than

* They have not only peopled the Antilles, but even Peru, and doubtleſs the reſt of the new world. The Indians call them, in their language, *Oaocha*, that is to ſay, *Come from the ſea.*

See *L' Hiſtoire de la decouverte et de la conquête du Perou, par Auguſtin de Zarate.* Tome 1. Livre 3.

the former, to be indigenous here) a ſpecies of citron, very ſmall but very good, the wild orange, the ignama, and perhaps the choux-caraïbe. Add to theſe ſcanty means, the fiſhery on the coaſt, and in the rivers, by no means productive, and you will ſtill enquire, how the inhabitants of a country, which has been repreſented to us as extremely populous, could be ſupported? If we may believe the inflated accounts of the Spaniards, no ſpot on the globe was more ſo than Saint Domingo on its firſt diſcovery; ſince Columbus, when he marched againſt Manicata, one of the caciques of the iſland, found him in the plain of Viga-Real at the head of an hundred thouſand fighting men! More moderate calculations, however, make the population of the whole iſland amount to no more than twelve or thirteen hundred thouſand ſouls; ſo that if you add to this number forty or fifty thouſand who were brought hither from the Bahama iſlands, and thoſe who might be born here, from the date of its diſcovery to that of its complete depopulation, you will find that the conquerors of the new world only extirminated in the ſingle iſland of Saint Domingo, about two millions of human beings, of whom the greater part periſhed in the mines, where, according to the evidence of the traveller Boſſu *, they contracted the too famous malady which has

* *Nouveau Voyage aux Indes Occidentales.* Tome 1. Lettre 1.

made,

made, and ſtill makes ſuch ravages amongſt us, under the name of the French diſeaſe, &c. We read, and that in a Spaniſh author, that in the iſland of Cuba, fifty families hung themſelves in one day, in a ſingle village, to eſcape the tyranny of his barbarous countrymen. †

You will probably aſk me, Sir, who was the ſpeculative genius who took upon himſelf the care of introducing among us theſe rats, which commit ſuch devaſtation, that a large field of millet or maize is ſometimes devoured by them in the courſe of a night; eſpecially if it be on the edge of the woods, where theſe animals are ſo numerous, that they have traced out paths as well worn as thoſe which lead acroſs our fields? A ſhort reſidence at a ſea port would have enabled you to ſolve the problem.

The builders have ſcarce fixed the ribs of a ſhip to the keel, and laid on a part of the ſheathing, ere the rats eſtabliſh themſelves in it: the veſſel is launched: the rats ſtill keep poſſeſſion—But how, you will ſay, do they live, before it is victualled? They ſwim aſhore at night, eat for the next four and twenty hours, and return on board. As many as can, get into the corn magazines, where they

† *Hiſtoire de la Conquête de la Floride.* Livre 1. Chap. 10.

briſtle

briſtle up their hair, roll themſelves amongſt the grain, and return with all they can accumulate! But how do they get on board with their freight, when the ſhip is no longer in the dock? They creep along the cables, through the hawſes, or into the port-holes, from whence they betake themſelves to the hold, the bread room, the ſpace between the ſheathing and the ſides, &c. where, without anxiety for the future, or embarraſſment about the claws of their enemy, they live and breed with ſo much rapidity, as to become the peſt of the ſeamen, and the terror of the cats!

There is ſomething very aſtoniſhing in an inſtinct ſupported by ſuch a number of intelligent combinations: but the manner in which they provide themſelves with the choiceſt proviſions of the ſtore-room, is ſtill more ſo. I ſhall conclude my letter with a fact which I have taken from one of our old voyagers.

" We had obſerved for ſome time, that a certain " number of eggs were daily miſſing from a ſmall " barrel in which they were packed, and which " was ſecured under lock and key. Six of us, " amongſt whom was the captain, bored each a " gimlet hole in the wainſcot—and this is what " we ſaw:

" Three

" Three large rats approached the barrel, which " was about half-full. One of them went into it, " another fixed himſelf on the edge, and the third " ſtaid below, on the ground. We could not ſee " what was doing in the barrel, but preſently the " rat on the edge appeared to be drawing up ſome- " thing from the inſide into which he had ſtooped; " while he who had ſtaid below got upon the hoops, " and, ſtanding, on his hind legs, reached forward, " and received into his mouth what he who ſtood " upon the edge had drawn up. The latter, letting " go his hold, ſtooped again into the barrel, and " drew up ſomething which was in like manner " taken hold of by him on the hoops; we now diſ- " covered that it was the tail of a rat; and at the " third tug, the thief appeared with an egg claſped " between his legs, his back reſting againſt the " inſide of the barrel, and his head downwards. " His two companions then placed him in equili- " brium upon the edge of the barrel; he who was " below took him again by the tail; and he who " was above, by one of his ears, and in this man- " ner, ſupporting and conducting him by the two " extremities, they lowered him gently down from " hoop to hoop, till they placed him on the ground, " ſtill on his back, and holding the egg between " his legs. In this manner they dragged him to- " wards a hole between the wainſcot, and the

" ſheathing

" ſheathing of the ſhip, where we loſt ſight of " them." *

What would have intereſted me, Sir, as much as the ſight of the capture, would be the manner in which the egg was divided †. We may be partly certain, however, that it produced no diſputes nor animoſities amongſt adventurers equal in right and in power.

To conclude. It is difficult to conceive the rapid increaſe of theſe animals in a long voyage. I recollect that on my return from the Cape of Good Hope, the cats ventured no longer to appear between decks; and that though we deſtroyed numbers of them by traps, &c. they bred ſo faſt that they ſeemed to increaſe upon our hands. When this is the caſe, there is no other way to clear the ſhip of them, but by completely unloading it on your arrival at a port, ſtopping all the ſcuttle holes but one, and making a fire with wet ſtraw in the bottom of the hold: the ſmoke will compel them to quit their retreat, and drive them, half ſuffocated,

* *Journal d'une Voyage aux Indes Orientales.* Tome 2.

† Our ingenious author might not have been ſo much intereſted in the diviſion of the plunder as he imagined: ſince the recorder of this moſt extraordinary anecdote (a man of ſtrict honour and veracity) tells us, that he ſaw the rats return a ſecond and a third time to the barrel, ſo that there was an egg a-piece. T.

to

to the vent which is left open for them, where they may be deſtroyed, or driven with eaſe into the ſea.

LETTER XVIII.

Deſert,
November 1789.

YOU will have a very inadequate idea, Sir, of the life I lead here, if you think that my labours are confined to ſuperintending the poultry-yard, and the pigeon-houſe; to cultivating the garden, and overlooking the kitchen, and the workſhop. I have extended my department over all that can contribute to the embelliſhing or enlivening our ſolitude.

My firſt enterprize was to widen, for a ſpace of four or five hundred yards, the road which leads to the houſe, that we might have a place to walk in with comfort. This labour, which I executed alone, and with an activity that formed a ſingular contraſt to my exterior appearance, gave me no ſmall trouble, inaſmuch as I was obliged to cut through the living rock, and diſplace large blocks of ſtone, with no other implements than a wretched hoe, and a lever, whoſe powers I learnt to calculate by experience.

When

When, after long and reiterated efforts I had ſucceeded in ſuſpending one of thoſe maſſes on the edge of the ravine, I generally called Madame de L*** to ſee it precipitated down the ſteep. With a ſingle exertion of my foot I put it in motion; and I ſaid to her, See how that grandee in diſgrace involves in his fall the feeble plants which cling to him! —We have ſeen the ſame thing happen elſewhere.

Two fountains, one at the bottom of the ſemicircle in which the buildings are incloſed, and the other on the left, without the gate that leads to them, give birth to two rivulets, of which the former, after a few meanders, ſpreads into a little marſh; croſſes the road at right angles, which it undermines, and throws itſelf into the ravine: the latter, immediately after quitting its ſource, forms a ſecond marſh by filtering through the ſame road; and finally diſappears.

My firſt care was to carry a ditch, of a capacity proportioned to the volume of the firſt rivulet, quite acroſs the marſh, which by this ſimple operation was changed into a charming meadow: this I embelliſhed ſtill more by rooting up the coarſe and unſightly weeds that deformed it, and ſubſtituting in their ſtead the young ſhoots of the ananas, whoſe ſpreading ſtalk, ſurmounted by a beautiful apple

apple of gold, tufted with green, is a real decoration.

I had conceived an ambitious project, for the execution of which it was previouſly neceſſary to unite the two ſtreams. Even then my plan was full of difficulties; but they were not inſurmountable—the dread of failing, and the hope of ſurprizing Madame de L * * *, induced me to keep it a ſecret.

Although the elevation of the ſprings facilitated the flowing away of the waters, yet the chapped and porous ſoil preſented obſtacles almoſt impoſſible to overcome. By dint of induſtry and perſeverance, however, I overcame them; nay, I was indebted to them for embelliſhments, on which I had not reckoned, ſince they gave me an opportunity of forming ſome caſcades—and if my ignorance of the moſt ſimple principles of hydraulics occaſioned me to commit many blunders, each had its uſe, ſince it taught me to avoid others. It is thus that art is perfected!

In little more than a week, the two ſtreams, united and carried acroſs the road, in a well-compacted and regular channel, formed of flat ſtones, ſuſpended as it were, along the borders of the ravine, formed, under a canopy of verdure, cut out of the thick tuft of bamboos, a fall, which joined

to

to the murmur of my little caſcades, broke at length, and for ever, the long ſilence of our ſolitude, and ſtruck with joy and wonder both the echoes which repeated the ſound, and Madame de L * * *, whom I had ſecretly laboured to ſurprize, or rather to captivate and delight.

It is here that we paſs a great part of the day, ſhe in ſewing, I in reading; and her little girl in paddling in the ſtream with nothing on but her chemiſe, in the boſom of nature, of innocence, and of friendſhip. This peaceful mode of life, Sir, where every hour has its occupation, is not without its charms; however inſipid it may appear to you, after that which I have led elſewhere. Undoubtedly there is a wide difference between the bamboo arch under which I now repoſe, and the gilded ceiling, and magnificent dome I lately occupied in the palace of kings; to ſay nothing of the brilliant pictures with which imagination then enlivened my career—All, all is ſhipwrecked! but in loſing even hope, I preſerved one quality which can never be taken from me: the art of enjoying what remains.

While I wait till a long ſeries of labours, (which can only be executed by inſenſible degrees), ſhall enable me to add to what is already done, the little embelliſhments of which the ground is ſtill ſuſceptible, I have planted at the extremity of the garden

two

two rows of avocatiers, which will one day form a ſhady alley from the houſe to the road. The ſide of the hill, where the negroes have fixed their huts, and which riſes from the meadow I mentioned above, has nothing at preſent to boaſt of, but a few languiſhing coffee plants, with here and there a ſtraggling tree. I intend to cover it with ſhrubs and buſhes, ſuch as the green and red pimento, the pomgranate, the citron, and the ſweet ſmelling acacia. The dark green of the fir ſhall be contraſted with the red and white of the *franchipanier*; and by the ſide of the charming *papayer*, whoſe trunk, more elegant than that of the palm, its majeſtic rival, gains in grace what it loſes in grandeur, ſhall bloom the queen of flowers, the flower of every climate, the roſe! Inſtead of the ſteep and ſtony road by which the negroes deſcend to the houſe, a broad and eaſy path ſhall wind through the coppice, where the lianes, directed with ſkill, ſhall ſuſpend their coloured tufts from the branches of the orange tree, the ſampale, the acajou, the calabaſier, &c. If the rich European conſumes a part of his fortune that he may ſee the tulip tree and the magnalia of America degenerate in his garden, why ſhould not I gratify a ſentiment more active and more pleaſing than curioſity, by naturalizing a few of the trees of my native country? Do you think, Sir, that

* See the concluſion of the ſecond Canto of "*Les Jardins*," by M. de Lille.

my

my feelings would be leſs tenderly touched at finding in Saint Domingo the aſpin or the birch of our woods, than the young Potavira's, when he diſcovered in France the trees of Otaheite!

If the experience of his predeceſſors (of whom ſcarce one in a thouſand realizes a fortune ſufficient to enable him to return old and infirm, to die in his native country) had not been thrown away on the firſt who fixed his reſidence here; if the abſurdity of ſacrificing preſent pleaſures to the ambition of procuring, ſome time hence, uncertain and factitious ones, had not left the good man too little ſenſe to diſcover that the urgency of making a fortune does not neceſſarily exclude the power of being happy in the interim; inſtead of burying his caſa in the hole where it now ſtands, he would have built it on a platform, a little to the right of the plantation.

At this ſpot our walks uſually terminate, ſince I have made the road practicable. There, an horizon equally extended on every ſide, but broken by abrupt projections of the rocks, or the tops of the mountains, preſents us on the left the intire bay of Jaquemel, the gloomy defiles of the vale of Goſſeline, ſome of its buildings, a torrent, and the mountain of La Selle; on the right, one of the beſt cultivated diſtricts of the iſland, *mornes* leſs wild and

and ſavage, extenſive valleys, ſtreamlets which meander through them, ſettlements more rich and populous, and, to ſum up all, the ſea of Léogane, and the iſland of Gonave.

Behold, then, the limits of our walks, the theme of our regrets, and the object of our ſchemes to come! It is there that we frequently linger till the return of night compels us to retire ſlowly to our ſepulchre.—See, ſaid I, yeſterday, at the approach of evening, to Madame de L***, how many men complain of their exiſtence, for want of knowing how to extend and embelliſh it! Behold the moſt beautiful of hours! that in which the tears of the wretched ceaſe to flow with their ſweat; in which the ſkies leſs inflamed, permit us to breathe a freſher and a purer air! Why is my ear only ſtruck with the ſhrill and diſcordant cry of that flight of parroquets, or with the croaking of the filthy reptiles, who vegetate in the bottom of the ravine? Why does not the bell of the Angelus * announce to every habitation that the night brings repoſe? Why do not the barkings of the faithful dog aſſure me that I may ſleep in peace, relying on his fidelity? Why, inſtead of the dull and monotonous *tom-tom*, which that negro produces by

* The ſignal for Veſpers amongſt the Catholics—of which the firſt prayer begins with the word Angelus. T.

ſtriking

ſtriking on a body without elaſticity, do I not hear the ſound of the *galoubet*, or ruſtic flute, unite itſelf to the ſweet and well-timed voices of the negreſſes, and direct the light ſteps of that troop of ſlaves, who forget, in dancing, both the labours of the preſent day, and thoſe which await them on the next?

" All this is folly," ſay thoſe ſagacious people who have their entrails in their pockets, and their long ears ſtill nearer their wits than their head! " We came to Saint Domingo to acquire a fortune, " and not to ſee negroes dance, nor to liſten to " caſcades; prudence bids us live, not for the pre- " ſent, but for the future."

Be it ſo: keep then, ye provident œconomiſts of the future, keep the few flowers with which ye might have ſtrewed your way, to ſcatter over your bier— But when a reverſe, too frequent here, ſhall have compelled both you and me, to ſeek for conſolation in ſomething better than the promiſes of fortune, do not ſtrive to embitter by late and ſuperfluous regrets, the enjoyments which I have ſecured to myſelf in defiance of her caprice.

And let no one, Sir, advance the ſophiſm ſo often brought forward by thoſe who do not believe what they ſay, that our happineſs is the ſame, whether

whether we enjoy it in the paſt, the preſent, or the future; for I ſhall reply that, ſince one of theſe modes does not neceſſarily exclude another, there is nothing to prevent my connecting the enjoyment of the preſent with the recollection of the paſt, or the hope of the future.—" What a curſe, what a " dreadful curſe is our wealth," cries a modern traveller, " when it renders us incapable of happi- " neſs" *. It is, and ever muſt be with cupidity, " never rich in what it poſſeſſes, always poor in what " it deſires§;" and which takes the name of forecaſt; as it is with avarice, which aſſumes the diſguiſe of œconomy; and whoſe whole merit conſiſts in the art of living poor to die rich.

Whether we ſhall be ſeized with this mania in our turn, I know not; but, in the interim, we have augmented our ſtock with four couple of grey and white pintados, and with a male and female Hoco. The former of thoſe birds you are already acquainted with; you know the delicacy of their fleſh, and how much their vivacity, their clear and muſical cry, their numerous broodings, &c.

* " *Lettres ſur quelques parties de la Suiſſe*," *ſeconde partie*, *Lettre* 11.

§ " *L'Ami des Hommes*," Tome 1. Chap. 1.

enliven and animate the poultry-yard, whenever they are thoroughly tamed. †

The Hoco, Oco, or Oeco ‡, tranſported hither from Cayenne, and originally from Mexico, with a plumage of gloſſy black, except the breaſt, which is white, and a creſt of the moſt beautiful yellow, is ſtronger and larger than the peacock—perfectly familiar, but ſo great a coward, that a chicken of two days old puts it to flight; and ſo groſsly ſtupid, that a turkey, independant even of his ſelf-conceit, may fancy himſelf an eagle by his ſide. Nothing announces that the ſilly couple have yet thought of perpetuating themſelves—There is no great evil in a temporary check to the propagation of fools!

I have read over my letter, Sir, and find it to be a mere rhapſody, ſomewhat of the longeſt. Not to derogate from its character, I will take the opportunity of a ſlight fit of illneſs, with which I was ſeized, and which I eaſily removed by following the regimen of the country, to ſay a few words of its diſeaſes and its remedies. I muſt previouſly

† See a very minute and accurate deſcription of the different ſpecies of the pintado in the "*Recueil d' Obſervations curieuſes,*" &c. Tome 1. Chap. 10.

‡ This bird is extremely well deſcribed in the "*Journal du Voyage fait à la Mer du Sud,*" *avec les Flibuſtiers. par Ravenau de Luſſan.*" Page 41.

obſerve

obſerve that they are poſſeſſed here with an idea that people of a weak and delicate conſtitution reſiſt the influence of the climate more ſucceſsfully than thoſe who are ſtronger. The fact is obviouſly not ſo; but the opinion is eaſily accounted for, ſince the former, inceſſantly reminded of their danger, by their weakneſs, take every precaution; while the latter, full of a blind confidence in their ſtrength, inconſiderately abuſe it. It is with this as with fortune: 'tis not œconomical mediocrity, but prodigal opulence that ruins itſelf.

Undoubtedly, bilious and ſanguine temperaments are more ſubject here than elſewhere to the maladies produced by the fermentation of the humours, or the exhauſtion of the fluids, which produces an impoveriſhment of the blood: but nature has placed the remedy by the ſide of the diſeaſe. In very hot countries people eat little: the abundance of acids allows of an habitual but moderate uſe of them; they purify and cool the blood; divide and facilitate the evacuation of the humours—and if thoſe of a ſanguine habit are more ſubject than others to inflammatory complaints, they are, in their turn, leſs ſpeedily exhauſted by a tranſpiration, that may be ſaid to be perpetual. Such of the coloniſts as have good ſenſe enough to ſubmit to the mode of living the climate preſcribes, attain to a good old age, eſpecially when they in-

habit the higher grounds, where the air is more pure, the heat leſs intenſe, and where, when once ſeaſoned, they are intirely exempt from the maladies ſo prevalent in the plains.

If I may truſt my own experience, all food of too ſolid a nature ſhould be avoided, as well as too free a uſe of ſtrong liquors. It is, doubtleſs, neceſſary to give back to the blood the humidity it has loſt by perſpiration; but without having recourſe to the balance of Cornaro, a very ſlight acquaintance with your conſtitution will enable you to form a tolerable judgment of what it requires. At my firſt arrival here, a planter, with whom I was in habits of intimacy, perſuaded me that the uſe of water was preferable to that of wine. I was piouſly following his plan, when I perceived that the new Doctor Sangrado derogated prodigiouſly from his own principles, as often as he dined abroad: from this I concluded, that his late prohibition of wine muſt be merely underſtood of ſuch as might have been drank at his own table; and I reſumed my uſual regimen.

The action of the moral on the phyſical—neceſſarily more powerful in a climate where the ſenſes are ſo eaſily exaſperated by a moſt rapid circulation—ſhews the propriety of avoiding with the utmoſt attention, every thing that, by irritating, might

might give the organs a ſuperabundance of force and activity, which would quickly deſtroy their energy.

It is in the neglect of this ſalutary principle that we muſt look for the cauſe of that ſpeedy, and premature exhauſtment, which ſo ſoon deſtroys, or reduces to a degree of weakneſs and imbecility, a-kin to death, ſo many of the inhabitants of Saint Domingo.

I believe that cold, or at moſt, lukewarm baths, a light and wholeſome diet, gentle evacuations from time to time, a moderate degree of activity, and labour rather calculated to amuſe than to occupy, are all that is neceſſary to preſerve a little health, when one has reached a certain age. Every coloniſt is commonly provided with a ſmall cheſt of medicines, of which the principal are manna, ſalts, and rhubarb: the country itſelf produces tamarinds, and the leaves of the caſſia tree; a ſlight infuſion of which, with a little orange juice, makes as good a purge as a mixture more ſcientifically compoſed. Some ſpecies of the liane may be uſed for the ſame purpoſe; but you muſt be vigilantly on your guard againſt others which are a ſtrong and ſubtle poiſon. The negroes are but too well acquainted with ſuch as have this fatal property: their unhappy experience

experience in theſe matters has produced more than one Locuſta, in a country where the public ſtate of morals does not neceſſarily leave any influence to the empire of religion.

LETTER XIX.

Deſert,
December 1789.

I AM wholly of your opinion, Sir—The management of the ground is every where a moſt important object. I ſhall therefore venture to lay before you ſuch information as I have received on that of Saint Domingo.

Although the cultivation of ſugar be the firſt in conſequence, I ſhall ſay nothing of it at preſent, becauſe I have not had an opportunity of following it through all its details. I have only put a ſingle queſtion to the planters; and this they have not anſwered to my ſatisfaction. It was — why, working on a level, obliged to furrow the ground, and to maintain a great number of men, horſes, or mules, to carry canes, tranſport the liquor when made, &c. they did not, inſtead of the hoe, make uſe of the plough,

an

an inſtrument infinitely more ſimple and more expeditious: eſpecially as it would not only leſſen the number of negroes required by the preſent mode of cultivation, but produce the double ſaving of a conſiderable capital, and of a moveable property extremely expenſive, and often ruinous from the viciſſitudes to which it is ſubject; ſince, unlike every thing to be ſeen elſewhere, the fortune of a planter is founded here, much more on thoſe moveables than on the produce they are calculated to raiſe.

I know more than one inhabitant whom the idea of an innovation, by ſo much the more *barbarous*, as it tends to ſubſtitute beaſts to men, will drive to deſpair: but if I had the honour to be a ſugar planter, I believe, (that deaf to the remonſtrances of the generous proxeneta, who in return for the negroes my labour deſtroys, undertakes the care of peopling my ſeraglio with African beauties,) nothing ſhould prevent me from making all the trials I might judge neceſſary to remove my doubts on the comparative advantages and diſadvantages of the two methods.

Chance, routine, and a very limited degree of knowledge, have long preſided over the cultivation of coffee, introduced here for the firſt time in 1715, the epoch of the deſtruction of the cocoa walks.

It

It is but lately that, inſtead of the old cuſtom of ſticking the young plants in the ground at random, they have adopted the more eligible plan of giving their nurſeries a regular form; that of a quincunx —certainly a moſt advantageous one, as it admits of a free circulation of air, leaves a ſufficient ſpace for the plants to ſpread without injuring each other, facilitates hoeing, and, finally, abridges the labour of gathering the berries. They have a cuſtom of topping the plants at the height of four or five feet from the ground, that, by concentring the ſap in the lower parts of the ſtems, they may obtain a greater quantity of fruit: I ſuſpect the duration of the plant is abridged by the operation; but on this point I do not ſpeak with much confidence—that I could only be enabled to do by a long ſeries of experiments *. I ſhall only add, that, notwithſtanding

* Thoſe who wiſh for more information on the ſubject of coffee have only to read, if they have patience,

1. The Treatiſe of Proſper Alpinus, publiſhed in 1592.

2. Another Treatiſe of the ſame author, on the Medicine of the Egyptians.

3. The Obſervations and the Notes of Veſtigius, in 1638.

4. A third Treatiſe of Fauſtus Nairon, in 1671.

5. A fourth Treatiſe of Philip Silveſter Dufour, in 1684.

6 A fifth Treatiſe, by Nicholas de Blégny, in 1687.

7. A Letter on the Origin and Progreſs of Coffee, by Antoine Galland, in 1699.

And laſtly, An Hiſtorical Treatiſe on the Origin and Progreſs of Coffee, printed at the end of a voyage into Arabia Felix, and publiſhed in 1715.

ſtanding the imperfect ſyſtem at preſent in uſe, the annual average produce of the coffee plantations of Saint Domingo is eſtimated at the amazing ſum of eighty millions!

The moſt ſeducing article of cultivation for ſuch as are leſs eager to accumulate, than to enjoy wealth, is cotton. It is not ſo lucrative, indeed, as the reſt, but its returns are quick, and it requires fewer hands, fewer buildings, &c. Almoſt every ſoil agrees with it, though there are ſome, ſuch as that of Gonaïve for example, which raiſe plants of a ſuperior quality. It has to dread 1° certain winds which blight its flowers. 2° A fly, which preys upon them. 3° The competition of the Levant and India cotton. Finally, the greater or leſs degree of vogue, which ſlackens, ſuſpends, and ſometimes entirely arreſts the manufacturing of it into ſtuffs, and diſcourages the planter, always in doubt about the ſale of a commodity which has more than once been known to fail. *

It was Monſieur Déſelieux, as is well known, Governor General of the French Weſt Indies, who imported into them the firſt coffee plant—and who, in a ſcarcity of water, had the reſolution to ſacrifice the half of his allowance to the preſervation of his precious charge. Pietro della Vela, a Spaniard, contends moſt ſtrenuouſly, that the *Nepenthe* of Homer was nothing but coffee!—It is to be hoped the Gods did not drink it without ſugar.

* See the deſcription of the cotton-tree in *L'Hiſtoire d'un Voyage aux Iſles Malouines.* Tome 1. Chap. 5.

I have

I have little or no information to give you reſpecting indigo. I do not know a ſingle planter who cultivates it, and I have ſeen ſeveral eſtates where it has been long given up—you will find the reaſon in a former letter.

The height, the extenſive ſhade, and the beauty of the fruit of the cacaoyer, or cocoa-tree, make the people of taſte regret that this article of commerce has alſo been renounced. With reſpect to caſſia, rocou, tobacco, ginger, and Brazil-wood, which formed, within theſe hundred years, the principal, and almoſt the ſole reſources of Saint Domingo, they are hardly known here by name, ſince the introduction of cotton, ſugar, and coffee.

An Academy of Agriculture has been eſtabliſhed at Cape François, to which the planters are indebted for ſome obſervations, which have improved the art of cultivation—but, reduced merely to give advice, and to propoſe experiments, which no one is tempted to make at his own riſque, it will never attain the end of its inſtitution until government ſhall take the expence upon itſelf.

Notwithſtanding the progreſs which cultivation has made here within the laſt twenty years, I have taken notice of a very great error—that of employing the hoe in weeding, inſtead of the hand: for thus

thus it happens that the roots which are left in the ground, inceſſantly produce new ſhoots, while, if they were pulled up, care being taken to do it before the plants had ſeeded, we might hope by degrees to exterminate them intirely. It is in general a wretched mode of calculation, always to prefer the moſt expeditious method; ſince we can never conſider a work as finiſhed, which we have conſtantly to begin a-new.

Perhaps, Sir, it would be proper to ſet aſide, under the name of *King's Farm*, or *Eſtate*, a piece of land ſufficiently ſpacious, and varied, to admit of every ſpecies of cultivation. There, experience entruſted with the care of verifying the new methods, might rectify their defects, eſtabliſh their excellencies, and attempt new improvements.

They are now making ſome experiments of this nature in the King's Garden, at Port-au-Prince, but it is neither in a garden, nor on a few detached plants, that they can be ſo effectually made as to demonſtrate the eligibility of adopting this or that particular ſyſtem. A careful and intelligent man may laviſh ſuch pains on a new plant as to make it thrive prodigiouſly in a well prepared ſoil, without being authorized from thence to conclude that its culture would be equally ſucceſsful upon a larger ſcale. To ſay the truth, this reflection does not

ſeem

ſeem to have eſcaped the managers; ſince they have lately diſtributed a number of clove-trees among the planters. Several have died; others have ſucceeded: ſo that the general queſtion reſpecting the poſſibility of naturalizing this valuable article muſt remain doubtful till more extenſive trials enable us to decide it.

The managers of the King's Garden talk alſo of introducing into the Antilles, the rima, or bread-fruit tree of the Society Iſles *: but will it find there the ſoil of its native country? Will it be able to reſiſt the hurricanes, and above all, the Chamber of Commerce,—ſtill more deſtructive?

The knowledge you previouſly had of this country, joined to what you have been able to add to it from my correſpondence, muſt have taught you that there is very little induſtry here. It has been baniſhed by a variety of cauſes, of which the four following are the chief.

1° The little taſte of the inhabitants for ſuch productions of the arts as depend on this ſecondary quality.

* See the deſcription of the rima in the *Nouveau Voyage à la Mer du Sud*, Page 187.

2° The

2° The ſcarcity of hands, which makes every article of workmanſhip extremely dear.

3° The earneſtneſs with which the Chamber of Commerce decries, ſhackles, nay, even perſecutes every thing which tends to weaken its influence, by rendering it leſs neceſſary.

4° The apathy which under a burning ſky permits men to remain ignorant of a multitude of wants, whoſe gratification, in becoming a ſource of enjoyment to the rich, opens a vaſt field to the induſtry of the poor.

Every article of furniture, whether of neceſſity, of comfort, or of luxury, is imported ready made from France, into a country which offers, in great abundance, to the carpenter, the turner, and the cabinet-maker, the different ſpecies of the acajou, or mahogany, the manciniller, &c. The Chamber purchaſes theſe woods at a low rate, works them up in the cheapeſt manner, and ſells the inhabitants for ſix livres, the ſame quantity of plank ſhe lately bought of them for ſix ſous.—You will allow, Sir, that this is carrying the rate of brokerage a little too high!

And what is the conſequence? That among the inhabitants who make what is very improperly called

called here *a clear wood*, that is, who cut down the trees in a certain extent of country, in order to cultivate the ſoil, there is ſcarcely a man who thinks it worth his while to ſelect the valuable part, before he commits the fall to the flames; which thus devour inconceivable treaſures.

Saint Domingo abounds in a very beautiful ſpecies of fern. It is not then impoſſible but that glaſs might be made here of a ſuperior quality to that of Europe. The earth offers of itſelf to the potter a new ſubſtance for his ingenuity, and when it is conſidered how vaſt a conſumption of theſe two articles of the firſt neceſſity, the awkwardneſs of the negroes occaſions, it is greatly to be lamented that no attempts have been made on the ſpot to procure them at a price leſs ruinous.

Hitherto they have only thought of employing the *pitre* to make halters for horſes and aſſes. Its thread, which is of a dazzling white, ſtronger than hemp, and leſs brittle than hair, would ſupply with advantage the place of thoſe two ſubſtances, in a variety of articles where they are at preſent ſolely employed.

They manufacture, but in no great quantity, from the *Latanier*, or fan-tree Palm, a ſort of hat, which is lighter than ours, and leſs retentive of the rays of the

the ſun: it is alſo leſs liable to be ſpoiled by alternately imbibing the moiſture and the duſt. It would not be amiſs, then, to encourage the uſe of them; ſince they are not only better adapted to the climate, but cheaper, and more durable than thoſe of felt.

The Palma-Chriſti, which the botaniſts call the *Ricinus Americanus*, the Caraibs *Carapat*, and the natives of Peru *Pillerilla*, is a ſhrub, whoſe leaf, applied to the breaſts of nurſes, is ſaid to increaſe the quantity of milk. I cannot vouch for the certainty of this quality in the Palma-Chriſti, but I know that its fruit, or its ſeed, produces an oil extremely ſweet, which, independent of the other uſes to which it may be applied, is adminiſtered with the beſt effects to children afflicted with cholics or ſubject to conſumptions. *

The female mulattoes compoſe, with a few fruits, ſuch as the citron, the ananas, &c. a coarſe kind of ſweet-meat: the dearneſs of refined ſugar,

* The oil is extracted in the following manner. "The fruit "is firſt ſcalded, then expoſed to the ſun for two or three days. "It is next pounded until it is reduced to a paſte, which is di- "luted with water, equal in quantity to the maſs of pounded "fruit; the whole is then boiled, and the oil which floats on the "top taken off with a ſpoon. The ſediment is again waſhed, "and a ſmall quantity of oil procured by repeating the proceſs."
Recueil d' Obſervations Curieuſe. Tome 1. Chap. 21.

which

which obliges them to have recourſe to ſyrup, or molaſſes, prevents them from giving it that degree of excellence which, like the liqueurs of Martinico, would procure it a vaſt reputation, and a rapid ſale.

One profeſſion and two trades, generally make at Saint Domingo, the fortunes of ſuch as exerciſe them; when they do not ſuffer themſelves to be ſeduced by the ambition of becoming planters. The profeſſion is the terrible one of phyſic, and the trades are thoſe of the maſon, and above all of the carpenter.

You will eaſily imagine, Sir, that neither the one nor the other can be gifted with any very extraordinary degree of intelligence and ſkill. An ignorant diſciple of Saint Como, a half-taught ſurgeon's mate, muſt needs be a wretched phyſician in a country where the art of healing requires a ſtudy perfectly new, and an extenſive botanical knowledge in addition to a long and regular practice in Europe.

So little is required of the maſon here, that the talents of a common labourer are amply ſufficient. Monſ. Cottin brought with him one of this deſcription, whoſe whole knowledge of the buſineſs was confined to the art of making mortar. He is at preſent

preſent owner of two negroes, and gives himſelf airs—juſt like the reſt.

The conſtruction of caſas and mills exacts ſomething more of the carpenter. Since we have opened a commerce with the United States of America, we have imported from thence frames of houſes, which are formed with more care, and furniſhed much cheaper than thoſe made on the ſpot: but as the wood employed on them is very far from being as good as that we uſe here, I ſhould imagine this conſideration would inſure a preference to the French workman, as ſoon as the competition ſhall have compelled him to lower his price, to finiſh his materials with greater care, and to exhibit more taſte, and intelligence in putting them together.

I have abridged, as much as poſſible, thoſe inſipid details which I ſhould never have thought of but for your queſtions. Undoubtedly, there is no climate which neceſſarily excludes a certain degree of induſtry: but placed here between agriculture and commerce, of which it is alternately the produce and the bond, it requires, to enable it to ſpread and thrive, a portion of encouragement and liberty, without which it muſt inevitably fall into languor and decay. Induſtry is the ſole patrimony of the poor; when it is too much circumſcribed,

it is either intirely deſtroyed, or reduced to ſupply by illegal means, the want of thoſe legitimate reſources of which it has been deprived.

LETTER XX.

Deſert,
January 1790.

I MUST give you an account, Sir, of two little excurſions I have juſt made. One to viſit a planter; the other to hunt the maroon: for the inſtant you leave this domeſtic animal at liberty it eſcapes into the woods, where it reſumes the form, the manners, and the character of the wild boar.

Monſieur Baudouin, the overſeer, and myſelf, ſet out before day-break, to dine at the bottom of the Goſſeline, about three leagues off, with his father, an inhabitant of that quarter.

After quitting, at the foot of the *morne*, the track which leads from Jaquemel to the Deſert, we were obliged to put our ſhoes and ſtockings in our pockets, and to walk barefoot near three miles, up the

the bed of a river, being the ſmootheſt and moſt convenient road; although the ſand which was here and there above water, was ſometimes ſo ſcorching as to force us to paſs over it as if we were treading on burning coals.

The ſilent and gloomy defiles which we traverſed, preſented ſeveral new ſpecies of trees, ſhrubs, plants, and flowers. Amongſt the firſt, that which ſtruck me the moſt was the *mapou*, beyond contradiction the largeſt of all trees, if, as I believe, and as Ravenau de Luſſan writes, his companions really made out of a ſingle one, a canoe which carried fourſcore men. *

Whatever may be the reſiſtance which ſuch an enormous maſs oppoſes to the action of the wind, I ſaw one torn up by the roots in the laſt hurricane. We ſhould deceive ourſelves, however, if we always judged of the violence of the winds by the ſize of the trees they overthrow. In no part of Saint Domingo have I found the ſoil which covers the under ſtratum of ſand, ſhell, or lime-ſtone, more than two or three feet thick; ſo that the roots of the largeſt trees, inſtead of ſhooting downwards are obliged to ſtrike out horizontally, in ſuch a manner that a conſiderable part of them always

* *Journal du Voyage fait à la Mer du Sud*, &c. Page 95.

appears above ground. But a more ſtriking diſtinction between the trees of this country, and thoſe of the old world is, that the ſtrait and ſmooth trunks of the former only begin to puſh out their branches towards the top, or at moſt at two-thirds of their height; ſo that, without the underwood which fills up the intermediate ſpaces, a foreſt here would reſemble an immenſe collection of columns ſupporting a canopy of verdure! In this reſpect, however, there exiſts a vaſt difference between the ſummits and ſides of the mountains, and the bottom of the defiles and plains: the foreſts which cover the heights can only be paſſed by the aſſiſtance of the hatchet, the others may be traverſed in any direction without much difficulty.

A difference of vegetation, extremely ſtriking in ſpots ſo little removed from one another, produces an agreeable variety wherever it takes place. Here is the abode of ſavage miſanthropy; there the aſylum of tender melancholy. This difference ſeems to prove that the expoſure, the degree of elevation, and above all, the nature of the ſoil, have at leaſt as much influence as the latitude, on the productions of the earth. It is to the want of not having ſufficiently ſtudied this co-operation of local cauſes, that we muſt attribute the numerous errors in the works of the learned, who, ambitious of referring the moſt contradictory obſervations to one common

common principle, obſtinately perſiſt in admitting no other cauſe for the difference of vegetation than the influence of the climate! Let them tell us, then, why the kingdom of Cachemire, which is only ſeparated from other countries of Aſia by a circular range of mountains, varies ſo much from them in the productions of its ſoil, that a European, on arriving there, might almoſt fancy himſelf in his own country: and why, in a part of the peninſula of Corea, ſituate nearly in the latitude of Paris, the winter is ſo rigorous in the beginning of September, that the inhabitants are obliged to have recourſe to their fur garments. Let them tell us why, at Quito, immediately under the line, the heat and cold are ſo temperate, that during all the year the trees never ceaſe to be alternately loaded with fruits, with leaves, and with flowers*: and finally, why according

* I ſhall only cite the three following examples of the influence of ſecondary cauſes. "The wind, which during all the winter "blows from the north, and paſſes over the icy regions of Nova "Zembla, renders the country watered by the Oby, and all Si-"beria ſo cold, that even at Tobolſki, which lies in 57° N. there "are no fruit trees; while at Stockholm, and even in higher "latitudes, the Swedes have not only fruit trees, but pulſe of "various kinds. This difference does not ariſe, as ſome have "ſuppoſed, from the ſea of Lapland being leſs cold than that of "the Streights, or from the mountains of Nova Zembla being more "ſo than thoſe of Lapland, but ſolely from the circumſtance of "the Baltic and the gulph of Bothnia tempering a little the ſe-"verity

according to the teſtimony of Auguſtin de Zarate, " the difference of the temperature of the air is " ſo great in Peru from one league to another, that " thoſe who are on the mountain ſuffer extremely " from the cold; while thoſe on the plain, at " only two leagues diſtance, are obliged to ſeek " for ſhelter from the great and exceſſive heat."* " —Admit, Sir, with me, that much reading, and a ſedentary life, have made many would-be philoſophers.

" verity of the north winds; while in Siberia on the contrary, " there is nothing to qualify the activity of the cold."

Buffon Hiſtoire Naturelle. Tome 2.

" Although the city of Athens and its diſtricts anſwer by their " poſition on the globe to the ſouthern parts of Spain, the people " never enjoyed there that mild and temperate air which is " breathed by the inhabitants of the kingdom of Valencia.

" Generally ſpeaking, the winters on the continent of Greece " are extremely rigorous, and the ſummers exceſſively hot: nor " does there exiſt any determined relation between the nature of " the ſeaſons, and the elevation of the pole, or the reſpective " latitude of the places."

Recherches Philoſophiques ſur les Grecs, Tome 1. Sect. 10.

" It is not abſolutely by the degree of latitude that we ſhould " judge of the heat or cold of a place. The nature of the ſoil, " the poſition of the mountains, and many external cauſes, have " ſo much influence on the climate, that the cold is often more " keen and more laſting in Piedmont, in the Milaneſe, and in " the north of Italy, than in France."

Voyage en Italie par M. Duclos, Page 5.

* *Hiſtoire de la découverte et de la conquête du Pérou.* Tome 2. Liv. 7. Chap. 6.

I am

I am convinced that in ſpite of the labours and reſearches of ſome French botaniſts, there is not yet a ſingle branch of the natural hiſtory of Saint Domingo perfectly underſtood. It will neither be a travelling naturaliſt, nor an inquiſitive planter that will ſupply what is deficient: the former will ſpeedily be in want of time, health, and perſeverance; the latter will neither have the knowledge, the habits, nor the enthuſiaſm which this kind of ſtudy indiſpenſably requires. This uſeful glory muſt be reſerved for the government; and although it ſhould have no other end in view than that of extending its influence, it might eaſily accompliſh its purpoſe by eſtabliſhing a *Royal Plantation*, where the directors might by degrees collect all the indigenous productions of the vegetable kingdom which deſerve to be known, either for their ſcarcity, their beauty, or their peculiar properties—a perfect diſcovery of which might throw new light on the ſcience of botany, ſo uſeful to chemiſtry, ſo neceſſary to phyſic!

We reached the plantation of Monſ. Baudouin about nine o'clock. As we were expected, we found breakfaſt on the table—no unwelcome ſight to a man who, for the firſt time in his life, had juſt walked eight or nine miles barefoot.

Monſ.

Monſ. and Madame Baudouin appeared to be people of excellent ſenſe, and their converſation was at once inſtructive and entertaining. Their free and open reception, the eaſe with which they did the honours of their houſe, their anxiety to render it agreeable to me, the complaiſance with which they anſwered my queſtions, and even my objections, all contributed to recal to my mind the ancient frankneſs, the good old hoſpitality of Saint Domingo.

I examined their plantation attentively. As it differed in ſome degree from all I had hitherto ſeen, I took the liberty of aſking the reaſon of it; and I learned with pleaſure, that ſtrangers to the ambition of going to die in a different land from that which ſupported them, the imperfections I diſcovered in ſome branches of their cultivation, in ſome details of their domeſtic œconomy, were leſs to be attributed to want of ſkill, than to the moderation of their deſires. "We have enough to "live comfortably," ſaid Monſ. Baudouin to me; "why ſhould I vex my old age to acquire an affluence which I have never known, and which I do "not find neceſſary to my happineſs? We ſhould "at leaſt leave ſomething for our children to do."

The plantation is ſituated in a defile, narrow, but pictureſque. I ſaw there for the firſt time, the

the genipa, or ſablier, one of the moſt beautiful trees of the Antilles. It takes its name from the ſhape of its fruit, which I ſcarce know how to deſcribe to you, except by ſaying that it reſembles a ſand-box of the moſt elegant form. I brought one away with me, which I make uſe of at preſent, but which I fear I ſhall not uſe long, as this production, this fruit, this machine, or what you will, is liable to burſt, and ſhiver to pieces, with an exploſion like that of a petard, when it is leaſt expected.

This ſingular effect cannot be attributed, as is generally ſuppoſed, to the ſand with which it is filled, but to its acquiring a certain degree of maturity; ſince it ſometimes takes place while the fruit is hanging on the tree.

We returned to the Deſert by a different road, but nearly in the ſame manner as we came. I ſtood in need of a few days reſt, as well to recover from the fatigues of my excurſion, as to prepare myſelf for the chaſe of a wild boar, whoſe traces the overſeer had diſcovered, and for whom he had ſet a trap from which he promiſed himſelf the fulleſt ſucceſs.

On the day appointed for the expedition, I repaired before it was light, to the place where the negroes

negroes were aſſembled to work, for the purpoſe of taking with me my friend Mazimbo, whom I regarded with affection on account of his gaiety, his readineſs to oblige, the ſweetneſs of his diſpoſition, and his attachment to his female companion Laoua. Fortune had put it into my power to ſave the life of this good and intelligent negreſs, and in conſequence of it they had both conceived ſuch an attachment to me, that their gratitude knew no bounds.

I found Mazimbo leaning on his hoe, and looking with a penſive air on the horizon, now ready to kindle with the firſt beams of day. "What are "you about, Mazimbo?" ſaid I. "What are "you looking at ſo attentively?" "*Pays moi li "là,*" "*Mine country there,*"—ſaid he, ſtretching his arm towards the riſing ſun, while a tear trickled down his cheek. *Mine country there*, too, thought I, but I have hopes of ſeeing it again; thou, poor negro, will ſee thine no more.—"Can you ſhoot, "Mazimbo?" "Yes, Maſſa, me know."—"Good! "quit your hoe, then, and come with me."

While I was ſpeaking, the overſeer came up with a ſpare gun, which I immediately put into his hands: tranſported with this proof of confidence, Mazimbo turned proudly round to Laoua who gave him a ſmile; threw a glance of ſuperiority upon his

his labouring companions, and at once forgot both Africa and the ſun.

We had two long miles to paſs, in a country broken with precipices, and covered with almoſt impenetrable woods, before we could reach the bottom of a ſort of abyſs. Mazimbo, with his muſquet ſlung in a ſhoulder belt, and a hatchet in his hand, marched at our head, and freed us from a part of the lianes which obſtructed our way. We followed as well as we could, walking, creeping, and ſliding. Thanks to the advice of Monſ. Baudouin, who took eſpecial care of me, I more than once eſcaped mangling my hands in attempting to break my deſcent by the aſſiſtance of a kind of thorn, full of large prickles, as ſharp as a razor.

When we had reached the hollow, where we expected to find the enemy, we ſeparated for the purpoſe of ſurrounding, and aſſailing him in ſeveral places at once. But whether it was that he had ſcented us, or that he happened to be juſt then amuſing himſelf elſewhere, we could find nothing but the impreſſion of his body in a marſhy place, where he had lately been wallowing. The overſeer's trap, placed juſt by, was ſtill untouched. To judge of his ſize by the print of his feet, he muſt have been an enormous animal. We attempted to follow his track, but the cloſeneſs of the underwood,

wood, and the want of dogs, made us renounce all hopes of coming up with him.

Our return was attended with few difficulties, as the road was, in ſome meaſure, already cleared; and ſteep and craggy heights are generally more eaſy to climb than to deſcend.

Let who will deſtroy the Caledonian boar for me! I have had enough of the hunting of Saint Domingo, where all the game is compriſed in the maroon hog, the wild pintado, the wood-pigeon, which is a bird of paſſage, and a few others, ſuch as the turtle, nearly the ſize of our quail, and in great plenty; ſnipes, very ſcarce; parrots, at which it is almoſt impoſſible to get a ſhot; and the palm-tree bird, whoſe fleſh is ſaid to be delicious.

That which I ſhould be the moſt curious to procure, dead or alive, is a humming-bird, which I have long been endeavouring to ſurprize: but this little creature whirls round with ſuch rapidity, that the niceſt attention is barely ſufficient to diſcover him, without its ever being poſſible accurately to diſtinguiſh, much leſs to take aim at him.

There are yet other ſpecies of birds, one of which is honoured by the inhabitants with the name of nightingale, on account of his ſong, which is not

not immelodious. Very different from him whoſe name he uſurps, an enemy of ſilence, and of ſhade, he never perches but on the tops of trees, and never ſings but in the middle of the day.—A moſt injudicious choice of time, if he wiſhes to be heard —I have laid myſelf under a ſevere injunction never to ſhoot any of theſe charming companions of our ſolitude: in revenge, I have declared inexterminable war againſt ſnakes, which, as I am informed, are not venomous, but which are, notwithſtanding, moſt diſagreeable gueſts, and would be extremely familiar, if they were once tolerated. They differ in ſize; ſome are not larger than thoſe with us, while others are more than a foot in diameter: theſe are the ſcarceſt and the leaſt noxious. They haunt the magazines, where the planters ſee them with pleaſure, as they are mortal enemies of the rats, which they deſtroy wherever they come.

LETTER XXI.

Deſert,
February 1790.

THERE is a ſort of people, Sir, who fancy it ſufficient to ſet foot in a ſtrange country to be under the neceſſity of finding every thing in it ſtrange. —To this we muſt attribute the exaggeration with which travellers ſpeak of the rains of Saint Domingo, which, according to them, never fall from the clouds but in torrents. The fact is, that it ſeldom rains here without being attended by ſtorms, and that theſe boaſted cataracts have little to diſtinguiſh them from ſhowers of the ſame kind which fall in every other country.

Nature, which ſeems to follow a much more regular ſyſtem here than elſewhere, appears to have aſſigned them an invariable epoch. Nor is it difficult to diſcover the cauſe of this difference, when we conſider that the proximity of the great Regulator of the ſeaſons muſt neceſſarily ſubject the climate of the torrid zone to a proceſs more uniform than that of the places where his influence is weakened by diſtance.

The

The rains, which are almoſt always accompanied with thunder, never laſt long: during a part of the year, their abſence is ſupplied by the dews, which fall in great abundance. It is proper to inform you, that what I ſaid reſpecting the regular progreſſion of the ſeaſons, is not to be underſtood in its moſt rigorous ſenſe. A fatal drought during all the rainy ſeaſon, that is, from June to October, ſometimes drives the planter to deſpair; while at others, heavy rains in the dry ſeaſon, precipitate an unexpected and ruinous vegetation. All climates, all regions of the globe, are in like manner liable to exceptions, more or leſs rare, to the general laws of nature. No latitude appears more ſubject to invariable rules than that of the Delta, where it is ſaid never to rain in ſummer; yet, in 1761 there fell ſuch a quantity of water, that the greateſt part of the villages of Lower Egypt, which are built principally of mud, were, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, utterly diſſolved, and annihilated by it. *

This difference of wet and dry is almoſt the only one which diſtinguiſhes the ſeaſons. As the diurnal courſe of the ſun divides the twenty-four hours into two parts, nearly equal, of day and night; his annual revolution, in like manner, produces a change in the temperature of the air, which is

* *Voyage en Syrie et en Egypte*, par M. C. F. Volney. Tome 1. Chap. 14.

ſcarcely

ſcarcely ſenſible. I am of opinion, however, that local cauſes have, in this reſpect, as great an influence as the rotatory motion of the globe †; in other words, that the difference of climate depends as much on the ſituation as on the ſeaſon—ſo that the heat ſhall be more ſenſible in the plains in winter, than on the mountains in ſummer; while on the latter the ſummer's heat ſhall differ little from the winter's cold in the former—if we may uſe the word cold for a degree of temperature which permits you to breathe a little more at your eaſe, or, at moſt, to put on after ſun-ſet a little warmer covering than the ſhirt and linen drawers you were clad in during the day.

I am very much inclined, Sir, to believe, that here, as well as every where elſe, the labours of mankind, in ſtripping the earth of the woods which covered it, and in thus exciting an extraordinary evaporation of the aqueous, ſaline, and metallic particles which nouriſh vegetation, and ſerve to develope a greater quantity of ſeed, have not only changed its nature, but even effected a conſiderable revolution in the climate.

This revolution, advantageous in ſome reſpects, became fatal to the fertility of the ſoil, from the

† In ſupport of this aſſertion, ſee Anſon's Voyage, Chap. 5. Book II.

moment

moment the planter carried his hatchet into thoſe parts of the woods which, placed like attracting pumps, on the brows of the hills, and the ſummits of the mountains, collect in vaſt reſervoirs the ſources of the ſprings and rivulets which trickle down their ſides. *

I have known ſeveral of theſe mercileſs deſtroyers bitterly lament the loſs of the only ſpring which ſupplied them and their negroes with water, without ever ſuſpecting it was to their own imprudence they owed this ſudden privation, this loſs—irreparable every where elſe, but which, by a ſingular combination of good and evil, is here ſometimes abundantly repaired by that phœnomenon which, on account of its frequency, and its effects, is at once the terror and the ſcourge of the human race, I mean an earthquake.

In conſequence of a very laudable curioſity (for ſuch I muſt call that which is directed to uſeful diſcoveries) many learned naturaliſts have endeavoured to explore the cauſes of theſe ſubterraneous convulſions. Three elements, fire, air, and water,

* There is indeed an order that every proprietor ſhall leave a certain quantity of timber trees always growing: but it is no better obſerved than a number of others. What is wanted is an expreſs and poſitive law.

have each in their turn furniſhed the baſis of different ſyſtems.

I am far from pretending to decide between the *Igniſts*, the *Airiſts*, and the *Aquiſts*: but if I were obliged to ſpeak my mind on the ſubject, I ſhould not ſcruple to declare that they are all wrong; ſince the mania of ſyſtematizing makes them conſtantly reduce the operations of nature to an excluſive principle; while I ſee no reaſon for diſallowing that different cauſes may very properly contribute to the production of one and the ſame effect. It is clear that two of theſe three principles do contribute—ſince if ſome ſupernatural power were ſuddenly to annihilate the moſt active of the three, I mean air, the other two, fire and water, would each remain equally inert and powerleſs. But what proves to a demonſtration the combination of all the three elements in the production of volcanos, as well as of earthquakes, is a remark that the burning mountains of South America, ſuch as thoſe of Cotopaxi in Peru, diſcharge an equal quantity of water and of fire; and that, in the earthquake of 1692, which deſtroyed a part of Jamaica, torrents of boiling water were ſeen to ſpout from the ſhattered ſides and ſummits of the mountains: theſe effects have been attributed to the influence of the tides; and, in my mind, with ſome degree of probability; ſince in the higher latitudes, at Kamtchatka,

Kamtchatka, for example, it has been obſerved that earthquakes are moſt frequent during the equinoxes, particularly the ſpring ones, when the tides are at the higheſt. *

Amongſt the obſervations to which this important phœnomenon has given birth, there is one which might lead us to conclude it was unknown in a certain degree to remote antiquity, ſince although the mere motion of Jupiter's eye-brow ſhook the univerſe, all alluſion to earthquakes ſeems to have eſcaped the lively and brilliant imagination of a people, with whom the moſt abſtract philoſophy conſtantly perſonified and covered with an allegorical veil, every thing appertaining to the vaſt domain of nature and art!

Inſtead of a diſſertation ſufficiently learned to enable you to form an opinion of the cauſe of earthquakes, I muſt content myſelf with offering a few obſervations which have probably eſcaped the notice of my predeceſſors: I ſay, probably; becauſe, having determined in my own mind to read

* See *L'Hiſtoire et Deſcription du Kamtchatka, par M. Kracheninnikow.* Tome 2. Page 58. In page 40 of the ſame volume, the author takes notice of a fact, too material to the ſubject I am upon to be omitted: it is, that in Kamtchatka lakes are always found on the ſummit of every high mountain, which had vomited ſmoke and fire.

as late as poſſible, the travellers who have written on Saint Domingo, that I might not prove, like ſo many others, the mere echo of thoſe who have gone before me; I cannot poſſibly determine whether ſome of them may not have anticipated me.

Of four earthquakes which I have already experienced, three took place about mid-day. The wind fell inſtantaneouſly; a trembling, more or leſs violent, ſucceeded to this pauſe; immediately after which the wind began to blow as before. Each of thoſe earthquakes was followed, after an interval of twelve hours, by a kind of trepidation, a ſhock, which appeared to me infinitely leſs ſtrong than that of the morning, yet ſufficiently ſenſible to awaken me in a fright.

Along the ſouthern coaſt is an opening or cavern, into which the ſea penetrates to an unknown depth, and which the inhabitants call the Gulph. Every time the iſland is menaced with an earthquake, there iſſues from it a deep and hollow bellowing which ſcatters on every ſide terror and diſmay. Thanks to the eagerneſs with which the Spaniards haſtened to exterminate the indigenous inhabitants of the iſle, we know no more of their manners, and of their moral and religious opinions, than what the neceſſity of juſtifying their deſtruction has dictated to their baſe and calumniating deſtroyers; but,

but, if the moſt enlightened people on the globe proſtrated themſelves before the oaks of Dodona, or the den of Trophonius; the unlettered and timid American muſt have been highly excuſable in paying the worſhip of terror to this organ of deſtruction; and adoring, like the inhabitant of New Zealand, HIM WHO SHAKES THE EARTH.

I have furniſhed you with facts, Sir; leaving you to deduce from them the conſequences your ſagacity may judge moſt fit to found a reaſonable ſyſtem on the cauſe of earthquakes. I now return to ſuch of their effects as are properly eſteemed the leaſt diſaſtrous, namely, the drying up of a ſpring, or the ſudden ingulphment of a torrent in one place, while they cauſe new fountains to bubble up in another, or excavate freſh beds for the rivers they have diſplaced.

If we muſt not rank in the number of inconveniences attached to the total extirpation of the woods, in breaking up new land, the fear of one day wanting timber for building and firing; if the climate allows us to derogate without danger from the axiom that a country ſhould never have leſs than a fifth, nor more than a third of its ſoil in foreſts; yet it cannot have eſcaped you, that there is a conſideration of poſitive utility, which ſhould ſometimes arreſt the axe of the planter. Although deprived of

every

every ſpecies of taſte, and inſenſible to the beauties of rural nature, his heart and his underſtanding be equally inſenſible to every conſideration but that of his intereſt, I would, nevertheleſs, put him in mind that this very intereſt, obliging him not to neglect, with reſpect to the inſtruments of his fortune, any of the means which contribute to their comfort and preſervation; this very intereſt, I ſay, preſcribes to him the neceſſity of leaving in his plantations, from ſpace to ſpace, ſome handſome trees, ſome ſhrubberies, where his negroes, who always dine in the open air, may aſſemble and eat together, and find under the ſhade of the woods they love, repoſe, which they do not love leſs, and new ſtrength for new labours.

The three wretched objections which have been made to me, would not deſerve mentioning, were it not that they will enable you to judge in ſome meaſure of the underſtanding of him who made them.

Theſe clumps you ſpeak of, ſaid he, though they may only conſiſt of three or four trees, and be very thinly ſpread, muſt neceſſarily occupy a portion of valuable land: beſides, they would not only be injurious, by their ſhade, to the plants which ſtand near them, but they would alſo hold out to the idle negro an inducement to reſt, an aſylum to which

which he would ſometimes eſcape from the vigilance of the drivers, and thus ſteal from your fortune ſome minutes of toil.

I feel all the importance of theſe objections; but I confeſs I have not ſufficient courage to combat the two firſt ſeriouſly: with reſpect to the laſt; while I allow that we ſhould not offer the idle additional opportunities of abuſing this propenſity of nature, I aſk thee, avaricious planter! if thou haſt any right to complain of thy negro?—Alas! the ſupineneſs with which he toils to enrich thee, is induſtry itſelf compared with the liſtleſſneſs with which thou laboureſt to render him happy! God forbid that I ſhould diſpute thy right to accumulate in thy coffers the ſweat and blood of theſe unhappy blacks; but deign, ſometimes at leaſt, to put thyſelf in their place: venture to judge of the weight of the yoke thou impoſeſt on them, by the impatience with which thou ſupporteſt that of thy own laws—and in thoſe moments when the hope alone of increaſing one day the maſs of thy enjoyments, induces thee to ſuffer ſome privations, condeſcend to recollect, that, wherever he throws his eyes, in the preſent, as well as the future, thy negro only ſees, only hears thoſe two terrible words, ALWAYS and NEVER.

LET-

LETTER XXII.

Jaquemel,
March 1790.

I AM juſt arrived from Port-au-Prince, Sir; whither my landlord had prevailed upon me to accompany him; and, unleſs I deceive myſelf, I imagine I have collected obſervations enough to furniſh two new letters.

We ſet out from Jaquemel on horſeback, attended by a ſingle negro—a carpenter by trade, and raiſed by us to the rank of valet de chambre, and groom for the journey.

Our firſt halt was at the houſe of a planter, whoſe name I have forgotten, where we dined; and who received us with more ceremony than M. Baudouin had done. A ſtorm which came on juſt as we were taking leave, determined us to ſtay with him all night.

Let thoſe who to feel their exiſtence are obliged to live in others; thoſe who want the degree of apathy, or the meaſure of reaſon neceſſary to enable them to ſuffice for themſelves; thoſe, in fine, who have

have any repugnance to the cares of domeſtic life; let all thoſe, I ſay, be extremely cautious how they become inhabitants of Saint Domingo. With reſpect to myſelf, who am never leſs alone than when alone; and who know by experience that a perſon may live in a deſert, provided he knows how to create occupations analogous to his taſte; I am perfectly convinced that in ſpite of the lonelineſs, and the profound ſolitude of this abode, the proprietor may be happy in it;—as may every man who, with moderate experience, moderate deſires, and a taſte for agricultural life, contents himſelf with ſeconding nature, and enjoying what lies before him, without attempting to invite, either the luxury of the arts, or the chimerical pretenſions of vanity, into the aſylum of ſimplicity and peace.

The firſt dawning of day found us on horſeback, directing our rout towards Leogane, along the high road made by government in this part of the iſland. Generally ſpeaking, it is but thinly peopled, ſo that we travelled almoſt conſtantly through the woods, paſſing and repaſſing more than twenty times in the ſpace of a few hours, the river which, after innumerable meandrings, empties itſelf into the ſea at Jaquemel.

The country we croſſed, however wild and ſavage, was far from being deſtitute of charms. For

For although one of the principal beauties of a landſcape be the contraſt of cultivated with uncultivated nature; yet there are certainly beauties of detail, and of character, which appertain excluſively to the latter, and which are never found but in mountainous regions, where they ſpring up at every ſtep from the variety of aſpects and forms; from the gradations of light and ſhade, and from the courſe, now ſlow, now rapid, of innumerable ſtreams.

What you will, however, have ſome difficulty, Sir, to believe of a country ſo rich as this, in its productions and its ſpecie, is, that of the two kinds of plantations which we paſſed from time to time in theſe deſerts, one ſhewed us only the picture of indolence in the laſt ſtage of wretchedneſs; and the other, that of the negligence and diſorder of poverty, contraſted with the pretenſions of opulence directed by the moſt execrable taſte. Thus you would ſometimes meet an elegant carriage drawn by horſes, or mules of different colours, and of different ſizes, with ropes for traces, covered with the moſt filthy houſings, and driven by a poſtilion bedaubed with gold, and barefoot!

We arrived at Monſ. Denis' by nine o'clock. I found in this planter, who had paſſed a part of his youth in France, more information than uſually falls

falls to the lot of his brethren. A garden well kept, a library not ill furniſhed, and a judicious plan which he had formed for rebuilding his houſe, and ornamenting the approaches to it, ſupplied us with materials for a long converſation, and for many agreeable walks.

A very handſome Creole lady of the neighbourhood dropt in *by chance*, and contributed to the pleaſures of a dinner, as good as it was poſſible to give unexpected gueſts; and during which we talked over again the merits of Monſ. Denis' new plan. While his charming neighbour ſeemed intirely abſorbed in liſtening to the different details, I could ſee plainly, in ſpite of all her manœuvres to deceive me, the point at which ſhe aimed—the conqueſt of our hoſt.

The moment the ſun, now ſinking in the weſt, permitted us to continue our journey, we ſat out for Madame Fauchet's, where we intended to ſleep. Her houſe lay pretty near the ſea, on the direct road to Leogane.

Although Madame Fauchet's was only a cotton plantation, as unproductive as thoſe which a long courſe of cultivation has exhauſted generally are; it produced a conſiderable income, from the various advantages which a ſkilful manager may always derive

derive from the vent of ſuch articles as garden-ſtuff, fruit, forage, wood, cattle and poultry, when placed in the vicinity of a port, or a road-ſtead.

Theſe kind of eſtabliſhments have not, I muſt confeſs, the eclat of an opulent ſugar or coffee plantation; but to the advantage of requiring an infinitely leſs number of hands, and to their returns, founded on the uninterrupted demand for articles of the firſt neceſſity, independent of the deſpotiſm and the caprices of commerce; may be joined a daily profit, ſo much the more to be reckoned upon, as the proprietor is not doomed, in this caſe, to ſee the intereſt of an enormous debt, or the wiſh to extricate himſelf from a burthenſome engagement, abſorb with the fruits of his toil, the hopes of his fortune to come.

We found Madame Fauchet too much engaged in the ſuperintendance of her farm to expect from her the little attentions which travellers, more particular, might probably have exacted. Our deſign in calling upon her was to have left our horſes there till our return, and to have borrowed of her, according to the good old cuſtom, a carriage to take us to Leogane; but her carriage was unfortunately out of repair, her black poſtilion ſick, and her mules already engaged. At the houſe of this lady I ſaw the only table of Manciniller wood which, I believe,

believe, is to be found in Saint Domingo. I defy the united efforts of all the arts to produce any thing ſo perfectly beautiful.

Thanks to the cuſtom of letting the horſes run looſe in the ſavannahs, to the difficulty of catching them again, and to the ſloth of the negroes, always more eager to return than to ſet out, we did not get on horſeback till the morning was far advanced, yet ſtill in time to reach Leogane by the uſual hour of dining. It was in the neighbourhood of this town that the indigenous inhabitants of the iſland had two eſtabliſhments under the names of *Yaguana* and *Xaragua*, the latter of which is celebrated as the ſcene of a moſt atrocious barbarity committed by a horde of Spaniards, who, at a treat given them by the pretended queen *Anacoana*, ſtrangled their entertainer, after having burnt alive, and even in the very room where the tables were ſpread, the caciques whom ſhe had invited to the feaſt!

The town of Leogane, built near the ſea, and conſiſting of a few ſtreets, which terminate in a large ſquare, was formerly the reſidence of the governors. At preſent it would be a mere deſert without the advantage of an anchoring ground, which allows veſſels to take on board the ſugars, &c. cultivated in the plain to which it gives name.

We

We were civilly received, and ſet down to a very good dinner by Meſſrs. Schiredan and Gatchair, merchants, whoſe carriage and horſes were luckily diſengaged, and ready to convey us to Port-au-Prince, which we reached about night-fall.

Port-au-Prince!——When a perſon has been acquainted in France with coloniſts, and above all with Creole coloniſts, he cannot approach Port-au-Prince, now become the reſidence of the civil and military powers, the capital of the richeſt country on the face of the globe! the moſt fertile in delights! the throne of luxury! the center of voluptuouſneſs! without experiencing that ſecret ſhivering, that pleaſing and vague anxiety which precedes admiration, and prepares the ſoul for enthuſiaſm—To be brief; I entered between two rows of huts, jolting along a duſty track called a ſtreet, and ſearching in vain for Perſepolis, amongſt a chaotic maſs of wooden barracks!

I defy, Sir, the moſt volcanic imagination to reſiſt the firſt effects of ſuch a ſurprize. In a ſtate of ſtupefaction, I aſked my companion where we were? At Port-au-Prince.—Yes, juſt as we are at Paris, in the ſuburbs of Saint Marceau, I ſuppoſe?—You will ſee that to-morrow.

The

The next day, although my eagerneſs to ſatisfy myſelf made me get up before the ſun, yet ten o'clock ſurprized me, ſtill ſeeking in the true Port-au-Prince, the *Pot-au-Pince* * of the inhabitants, without being able to find it. I diſcovered, indeed, from time to time, ſome caſas, more large, more ornamented than the reſt. An inſulated edifice of ſtone, and of a tolerably regular conſtruction, announced to me the reſidence of the governor; I ſaw, alſo, a market place, which the preſent intendant, Monſ. Barbet de Marbois, has lately decorated with two fountains, in a good taſte, but which are abſolutely inacceſſible from the filth which the negroes, who come for water, never fail to leave behind them. Adjoining this place, on a riſing ground which overlooks it, I obſerved too, a little eſplanade, planted with a few rows of young trees, and a baſon with a *jet d'eau* in the midſt of it, deſtined to ſerve for a terrace to the new government offices, which they propoſe building—but all this, even granting the ſtreets were more regular than they are, would ſcarcely conſtitute a city of the third rank with us. Beſides, moſt of this is the work of Monſ. de Marbois, and of the laſt two or three years; and clearly proves that the inhabitants of Saint Domingo ſaw, and ſtill ſee, the preſent Port-au-Prince as the Jews are ſaid to ſee the New Jeruſalem, in the old one.

* The Creolian method of pronunciation.

That

That the preſence of the government, the reſidence of the adminiſtrative bodies, a play-houſe, a garriſon, a port, a place of commerce, ſhould maintain at Port-au-Prince (the rendezvous of ſpeculators and fortune hunters of every kind) a buſtle which is to be found in no other part of the iſland, is natural enough: but, notwithſtanding, it is no leſs true, that abating ſome difference which relates merely to manners and cuſtoms, the compariſon which moſt forcibly ſtrikes one, at the firſt ſight of this famous city, is, that of a Tartar camp: I muſt add too, that with the beſt diſpoſition to favour the illuſion, and with all the indulgence which patriotic prejudice can warrant, every reaſonable man muſt feel himſelf obliged to me for putting an end to the abſurd exaggerations with which folly and diſingenuity have hitherto miſled the inexperienced.

I dined with Monſ. de Marbois, at whoſe table I fancied myſelf, for ſome hours, in Europe.

This gentleman, whoſe perſonal ſervices, and whoſe merits have raiſed him to the place he at preſent enjoys, propoſes ſhortly to publiſh a Compte Rendu: of this I will endeavour to procure you a copy; which will amply ſupply whatever I may have left deficient, on the population, political œconomy, commercial arrangements, &c. of the colony.

In

In ſpite of the public undertakings, the uſeful embelliſhments, the neceſſary improvements for which the inhabitants are indebted to Monſ. de Marbois, they reproach him with being more miniſterial than patriotic, more a courtier than a citizen, more a revenue officer than an adminiſtrator—and the two firſt of theſe deſignations already begin to aſſume a meaning highly dangerous for him who wiſhes to found on them his pretenſions to public eſteem.

If Monſ. de Marbois' *Compte Rendu* be the reſult of all theſe qualities combined; if its end be to lay open the knaveries of the ſubordinate officers of his department, and force the blood-ſuckers to diſgorge what they have ſwallowed, the beſt method of ſilencing the clamours of the one, and the calumnies of the other, will be to prove, by facts, that without injuring the intereſts which the ſovereign has confided to his care, his adminiſtration has ſenſibly increaſed the proſperity of Saint Domingo.

LETTER XXIII.

Jaquemel,
March 1790.

It is, Sir, to a former governor, to the Count de la Luzerne, at preſent miniſter of the marine, that the eſtabliſhment of a *Jardin du Roi*, or Royal Garden at Port-au-Prince, is univerſally ſaid to be owing. It is as well furniſhed as could reaſonably be expected from its infant ſtate: its declenſion or proſperity muſt depend in future on the degree of importance his ſucceſſors may attach to this monument of his taſte for the natural hiſtory of plants.

It is much to be lamented that the fate of a uſeful inſtitution ſhould thus depend on the inclination, the caprice, or the ignorance of an individual. I tremble whenever I call to mind what a maſs of treaſures the fanatic and ſtupid pride of the ſavage Omar deprived us of, when he committed to the flames that invaluable collection of human knowledge. Here the inconvenience we have to dread ſprings from a vice of a different nature—from perpetual change; from the ſhort ſtay of the chiefs in a country to which they bring nothing but imperfect

perfect theories; but principles which experience hourly proves to be either falſe or abſurd. Scarcely has a governor (ſuppoſing him to be deſirous of not acting at random) time to acquire the local knowledge which ought to form the baſis of his adminiſtration, ere he ſees himſelf replaced by a ſucceſſor ſtill more a novice than himſelf.

This deteſtable plan owes its origin to the rapidity with which certain governors accumulated a ſcandalous fortune. From that period, the place ceaſed to be given to merit, that it might become the prey of the ignorance, the thoughtleſſneſs, and the rapacity of this or that grandee, who, arriving here a ruined man, is expected, under pain of paſſing for a knave or a fool, to make his re-appearance in France, after three years at fartheſt, with the ſame fortune which three ſucceſſive generations of ſpendthrifts ſcarcely ſufficed to diſſipate.

What becomes of the public property in ſuch hands? And how, and at whoſe expence, is this prodigious wealth acquired? The governor is here neither a merchant, nor a planter: his dignity interdicts him from ſtock-jobbing, and from all the petty reſources which a culpable indulgence abandons to the leſs ſcrupulous induſtry of the ſubalterns. His ſalary is in truth conſiderable, but his expences are proportioned to it; and however

œconomical we may ſuppoſe him, it is difficult to believe that an income of ſome hundred thouſand livres can produce in a few years, a clear ſaving of ſome millions! When to this, Sir, we add the conſideration that the two branches of government, civil and military, are ſurcharged with a multitude of controulers, commiſſaries, clerks, receivers, inſpectors, generals, commandants, &c. who all labour with equal zeal and perſeverance to juſtify the confidence which their reſpective ſuperiors have in their talents, we ſhall no longer be ſurprized to find that the coloniſts have ſometimes found in their deſpair, a ſufficient degree of courage to ſend back to France, a governor who has been blind enough to meaſure the extent of his power by the diſtance which ſeparated him from its ſource.

The preſent governor, Monſ. Le Comte Duchillau, is, at this time engaged in making the tour of the iſland. The beneficent views which he has already manifeſted, diſtinguiſh him, as much as his military reputation, from the maſs of his predeceſſors. They have encouraged the inhabitants to hope from his adminiſtration every thing that can be expected from a man determined to ſacrifice a number of ſecondary conſiderations to the general welfare. This, and ſtill more, his well known reſolution to diſengage the colony from a part of her fetters, by throwing open the ports to the

Americans,

Americans, had already created an alarm amongſt the merchants. In vain do a majority of the coloniſts call for this meaſure; in vain do the bleſſings they daily invoke on his head, ſanction its propriety: the minority, compoſed of intereſted and deſigning men, will always be able by their gold and their intrigues, to prevent its taking effect; and thus prove to Monſ. Duchillau, that here as well as elſewhere, the power of his brethren is juſt the reverſe of what it ſhould be—unlimited to do evil, and circumſcribed within the narroweſt bounds, when there is a queſtion of doing good.

I believe, Sir, that I have now told you all it is poſſible to ſay of Port-au-Prince. The exceſſive heat, and the unwholeſomeneſs of the air, compelled us to quit, a day ſooner than we intended, a town rebuilt on the brink of the very gulph which had already ſwallowed a former one. Would you believe, Sir, that the confidence with which the inhabitants have erected a new dwelling on the ruins of the old, is the reſult of a ſyllogiſm! "The "mine is already ſprung," ſay they; "*ergo*, there "is no more danger!" But who will venture to aſſure us that the laſt exploſion cleared all the paſſages which communicate with the central fire? Who will take upon him to aſſert that the falling in of the earth has ſo completely choaked up all the ſubterraneous channels, that the flames, which gather

gather ſtrength from what they feed on, cannot form new vents for themſelves? In ſpite of the admirable logic of theſe reaſoners, I am dreadfully afraid that the inhabitants of Port-au-Prince have rebuilt their town upon a ſophiſm!

To the inſalubrity ariſing from its poſition in the bottom of a bay, and on a burning ſoil, muſt be added that of an immenſe ſwamp, which, intirely covered with mangroves, borders a part of the road leading to Leogane, and communicates immediately with the ſea. A mephitic vapour perpetually exhales from it, which is borne along the coaſt by the ſea-breeze, and precipitated with accumulated poiſon directly on Port-au-Prince.

On my return I examined the poſition of this nuiſance with more attention than when I paſſed it before, and thought I perceived a poſſibility of removing it altogether, by an operation—immenſe, if you pleaſe, but certainly not impracticable. I would run a dyke of conſiderable elevation along the border, which would ſeparate it effectually from the ſea: this would neceſſarily give the bottom a degree of conſiſtence, ſufficient to enable me to carry a number of drains quite acroſs it; and if theſe were directed with a tolerable degree of ſkill, I have no doubt but that the marſh would ſpeedily diſappear.

I do

I do not pretend, Sir, to know how many millions of livres, nor how many thouſand negroes ſuch an undertaking might require: but if ſovereigns ſometimes ſacrifice millions of piaſtres, and millions of men in the defence, or uſurpation of a nook of land, leſs valuable than this might be made, I ſhould think the love of the public good, the preſervation of the preſent generation, and, in that of the future, to be motives ſufficiently cogent to juſtify the expence. The Dutch have conſtructed at Batavia, at Surinam, and even in Holland, on this very principle, works much more extenſive, and with far leſs proſpect of ſucceſs.

We dined, between Port-au-Prince and Leogane, at a ſugar planter's, with whom I became acquainted at the firſt of theſe places.—I do not know how the rich inhabitants of the plain contrive to manage it; but nothing reſembles a ſtate of wretchedneſs ſo much as their opulence!

From thence we went to ſleep at Leogane. We put up at a very good inn, kept by a free negro, who is more than an hundred years old.

This man, by no means deficient in good ſenſe, and bleſſed with an excellent memory, had belonged to one of the firſt governors. He is well worth attending to by ſuch as wiſh to have accurate notions

on

on the early ſtate of the colony. He was preſent at laying the foundation of the firſt houſe in Leogane. I had the curioſity to look for it, and readily found its ruins, by the directions he gave me.—— Thus the new world has already its antiquities!

At Leogane we found our horſes, who were perfectly recovered from their fatigue, and brought us hither in one day, without baiting on the road.

If this expedition has increaſed my local knowledge, and corrected ſome of my opinions, the alteration, Sir, has not always been favourable to the inhabitants of Saint Domingo. Amongſt a variety of anecdotes, ſome of which may be exaggerated or untrue, there is one which the multiplicity, and reſpectability of the proofs do not permit me to call in doubt, in ſpite of its atrocity.

A lady, whom I have ſeen, a young lady, and one of the handſomeſt in the iſland, gave a grand dinner. Furious at ſeeing a diſh of paſtry brought to the table overdone, ſhe ordered her negro cook to be ſeized, and *thrown into the oven, yet glowing with heat*——And this horrible Megæra, whoſe name I ſuppreſs out of reſpect to her family; this infernal fiend whom public execration ought to drive with every mark of abhorrence from ſociety; this

this worthy rival of the *too famous* Chaperon *, is followed, and admired——for ſhe is rich and beautiful!

So much for what I have heard, and now for what I have ſeen.

The day after my return, I was walking before the caſa of a planter with one of his neighbours, when we overheard him bid a negro go into the incloſure of this very neighbour, pull up two young trees which he pointed out to him, and re-plant them immediately on a terrace he was then forming.

The negro went: the neighbour followed him, ſurprized him in the fact, and brought him to his maſter, whom I had by this time joined, in the hope of witneſſing a ſcene of confuſion which promiſed to be amuſing.

Conceive, Sir, what paſſed in my mind, when, on the complaint of the neighbour, I heard the maſter coldly order another of his negroes to tie

* A planter of Saint Domingo, who, in the ſame circumſtances, ſeeing the heat ſhrivel and draw open the lips of the unhappy negro, exclaimed in a fury, "The raſcal laughs."

Nouveau Voyage aux Iſles Françoiſes de L'Amérique. Tome 1. Chap. 1.

the

the pretended culprit to a ladder, and give him an hundred laſhes! We were both of us ſtruck with ſuch aſtoniſhment, that, ſtupified, pale, and ſhuddering, while the unhappy negro received the barbarous chaſtiſement in ſilence, we looked at one another without being able to utter a ſingle word —And he who ordered, he who thus puniſhed his own crime on the blind inſtrument of his will; at once the daſtardly perpetrator and the unfeeling witneſs of the moſt atrocious injuſtice, is here one of the firſt organs of the law, the official protector of innocence! Heavens! if a pitiful reſpect for decorum forbids me to devote the name of this monſter to eternal infamy, let me at leaſt be permitted to hope that Divine Juſtice will hear the cries of the ſufferer, and ſooner or later accumulate on the tyrant's head, all the weight of its vengeance!

LETTER XXIV.

Deſert,
April 1790.

BEHOLD me, Sir, once more returned to the Deſert: but ſince my expedition to Port-au-Prince, my averſion for this unfortunate country has increaſed to ſuch a degree, that I have ſeriouſly determined to quit it. This determination has juſt been ſtrengthened by one of thoſe events which ſlightly arreſt the attention of the public elſewhere, but which, in places where men, leſs diſtracted by the tumult of large ſocieties, feel more intereſted in what paſſes in their little circles, leave an impreſſion of melancholy as profound as it is laſting.

A man of birth, whom misfortunes (which he allowed were in ſome meaſure owing to his own conduct) had, in common with many other victims of too accredited an error, brought here in the hopes of ſpeedily acquiring a brilliant fortune, had vegetated for many years as a teacher of Italian, in a country where they are not over-anxious to underſtand even their mother tongue: when by dint of repeated applications he procured the rank of a ſub-lieutenant in the Colonial Marechauſſée.

It is the duty of this corps to aſſiſt in the execution of the rigorous meaſures which the Chamber of Commerce exerciſes towards its debtors. As the ſalary is low, the individuals that compoſe it, endeavour to make ſome amends by their induſtry for the ſmallneſs of their pay, in a country where bread is fifteen ſous a pound——that is to ſay, they rob that they may not ſtarve.

Monſ. de * * *, came ſometimes to ſee us. He ſpoke ſeveral languages with facility, was well acquainted with Europe, and had been in the Engliſh colonies. I was fond of queſtioning him reſpecting the domeſtic œconomy of the inhabitants, which is much better regulated than our own.

A few days ſince, after having chatted till nine o'clock, he left us to buy ſome gun-powder. I aſked him if he was going a ſhooting? "*Yes,*" replied he, "*to-morrow I intend to kill a very ſingular* "*animal.*" Here we parted, and the firſt thing I heard the next morning was, that he had blown his brains out; but not without the precaution of arranging his affairs in the moſt accurate manner, and writing ſeveral letters; in one of which he gave an account of the motives that determined him "to "quit his poſt before he was relieved."

I then

I then called to mind that before my journey to Port-au-Prince, the converſation turning on the ſubject of ſuicide *, on which we diſagreed, he repeated with emphaſis the following lines:

Quand on a tout perdu, quand on n'a plus d'eſpoir,
La vie eſt une opprobre, et la mort un devoir.

It would have been eaſy for me to demonſtrate the fallacy of this thought, by proving to him that the misfortune of having "loſt every thing" does not neceſſarily deliver us up to "opprobrium," or to any kind of humiliation which can "make death "a duty;" but I contented myſelf with anſwering

* It was brought on by the fate of a planter who was juſt then ſaid to have hanged himſelf. It is true that his young widow is vehemently ſuſpected of having ſaved him the trouble, with the aſſiſtance of a ſtout and vigorous negro, who has ſince acquired a ſtriking aſcendancy over his miſtreſs.

In a caſa, not far from that which I inhabit, a mulatto, a married man, had taken a female mulatto to live with him. From diſguſt, or repentance, he became ſincerely deſirous of returning to his wife. The olive-complexioned Medea diſſembled her rage, the more effectually to ſecure her vengeance. She continued to live on terms of friendſhip with both parties, and ſometimes invited them to her houſe, where at a dinner ſhe one day gave them, ſhe poiſoned both the huſband and the wife. The man died with every ſymptom of violence, the woman lives ſtill, but in a languiſhing ſtate. The two events furniſhed a ſubject of converſation for a few days; but no one ever took a ſingle ſtep to bring the perpetrator of ſuch an atrocity to juſtice—ſuch are the morals of the "fortunate inhabitants" of Saint Domingo!

his

his diſtich by another not quite ſo poetical, and by a ſaying of one of our old writers :

" Il eſt plus grand, plus difficile
De ſouffrir le malheur, que de s'en delivrer."

" There is much more courage in wearing out the " chain which confines us than in ſnapping it."* Here the ſubject dropped; but the unhappy man did not tell me, that after having frequently attempted, and always in vain, to regulate his expences by his very moderate ſalary, he had at length had the weakneſs to do like the reſt. Sent to a planter with a writ of arreſt, he had been induced by a bribe of a few Portugal pieces, to ſuſpend the execution and to report that the debtor was not to be found!

This action, which, ſtripped of its intereſted motive, would have been merely an official falſehood, and which, from the circumſtances attending it, actually appeared to be nothing more than taking money for a piece of ſervice; was in his eyes a baſeneſs, an infamy which nothing but death could expiate: and you will allow, Sir, that if there needs nothing but a ſophiſm and a moment of error, to give way to a ſtrong temptation, there is ſtill more delicacy, and probity, than courage required, to puniſh oneſelf like this unfortunate creature. Yes,

* *Eſſais de Montaigne.* Tome 2. Chap. 3.

the

the man who knew no other refuge than the grave againſt the remorſe of a bad action, was worthy not to have committed it.

This melancholy event holds out a ſtriking, but I fear a uſeleſs leſſon, to the aſſociates of the poor wretch who gave it; and to all thoſe governments, which by the moſt impolitic of all calculations, leave nothing for its agents to ſubſiſt on but illicit reſources; and thus conſent to partake the odium and the crimes they neceſſitate. Will monarchs never learn that it is altogether uſeleſs to pretend to public eſteem, while they ſacrifice the care of detecting and puniſhing fraud, to an œconomy as barbarous as it is immoral! Will they never comprehend that the gratuitous ſervice of knaves is preciſely that for which the country pays moſt dear!

Determined, as I am, to quit Saint Domingo as ſoon as poſſible; I ſhall be ſo much the more expeditious in furniſhing you with the reſidue of my obſervations; as I find that the fermentation of the mother country has already reached the colonies, whoſe ruin I ſhall never ceaſe to think ſhe is preparing, until it can be proved to me that two things may ſubſiſt together as incompatible as abſolute equality *, on which they pretend to found civil liberty;

* There are two kinds of equality, which ſhould not be confounded; a legal equality, which is the true political equality; and

liberty; and ſlavery, without which you have ſeen the colonies cannot poſſibly exiſt.

With a frivolity of character which doubts of nothing; with a verſatility of diſpoſition, which attaches itſelf to all things, and ſearches into none; with an impetuoſity of imagination which ſees an obſtacle but to overleap it, without embarraſſing itſelf with what may be on the other ſide; you are in danger of not arriving at the truth, before you have exhauſted every combination of error, and accumulated, if I may ſo venture to expreſs myſelf, on the head of a ſingle generation, ALL THE EVILS ſcattered over a long ſucceſſion of ages †—This is what I fear for your country——but to return to Saint Domingo.

and an abſolute, unconditional equality—a chimera which never did, never can, and never will exiſt in any human ſociety whatever!

† Who of us is not at preſent perfectly convinced that the French Revolution has violated more laws, uſurped more property, coſt more tears, ſhed more blood, excited more animoſities, and committed more crimes in the ſhort ſpace of five years, than the moſt unbridled, and ſavage deſpotiſm ever committed in as many centuries! May this terrible example of the abuſe of the moſt ſacred principles, ſerve for a leſſon to all ſucceeding times, and to every people who ſhall be tempted to imitate the French!

You

You will find in the Compte Rendu of Monſ. de Marbois as exact an account as can poſſibly be obtained of the black population of this colony. You will there ſee, in the comparative ſtatement of births and deaths, how much the latter exceed the former; and like me, you will be aſtoniſhed at the bold aſſertion of Monſ. Raynal—that the ſlaves born on the plantations are ſufficient to replace thoſe who periſh by labour, &c. *

In contradiction to this error, I can venture, Sir, to aſſure you, the reſearches I have made on the ſubject prove that out of every hundred negroes imported, nearly twenty, that is a fifth, die in the firſt year; while only five, that is, a twentieth, are born within the ſame period; and of theſe, one at leaſt, is ſure to periſh in the fifteen firſt days, of the *tetanos*, or locked-jaw.

This rapid deſtruction of the negroes is not to be attributed ſolely to change of climate. Owing either to a habit of body, naturally bad, or to an unwholſome regimen, the maſs of their blood is ſo corrupt, that the ſlighteſt ſcratch ſoon degenerates into a moſt dangerous wound. If to this original vice, we add the infirmities they neceſſarily contract in the middle paſſage; where they are crouded for

* *Hiſtoire philoſophique et politique des Etabliſſements et du Commerce des Européens, dans les deux Indes.* Tome 7.

months together, like ſheep at a fair, on the boards of a cloſe deck, ill dried, and worſe aired; we ſhall not be aſtoniſhed to find that, cruelly treated at the ſlighteſt ſymptom of impatience, wretchedly fed, waſted by chagrin, and devoured by rage, whole cargoes of theſe unhappy beings periſh before they reach the ſhores where they are doomed to be ſold; and where the greateſt part of them, perſuaded that they would not be bought like fleſh in a market, if they were not intended to ſerve for the ſame uſe, firmly believe they are deſtined to be eaten.

And, indeed, this conſideration has powerfully excited, not the humanity, but the induſtry of the traders. Careleſs of the loſs, for which they indemnify themſelves by raiſing the price, they have ſought, and at length found out the infernal art of giving the puſtulous carcaſes which people thoſe moving ſepulchres, an appearance of health and ſtrength which deceives and not unfrequently ruins a planter, who is too œconomical, or too poor (and the greater number are in this predicament) to have the negroes he purchaſes viſited by an honeſt ſurgeon, capable of aſcertaining the real ſtate of their health. Without this precaution, he will find, after his negroes have enjoyed a few days of repoſe, the venom, become more active, and more virulent by repulſion, beginning to manifeſt itſelf with the moſt alarming ſymptoms: and he may account himſelf fortunate,

fortunate, if by dint of ſkill, care, and expence, he can preſerve four-fifths of his purchaſe. I have known five out of eleven die in a few months! and I now aſk you, Sir, if Plato was wrong when he wiſhed to puniſh ſeverely every citizen who addicted himſelf excluſively to commerce?*

LETTER XXV.

AT the head of the dreadful catalogue of evils to which the negroes are ſubject, muſt be placed the yaws: it is, I believe, the only one they have communicated to their maſters, and "may be called "in good French *la groſſe vérole*"—ſays the reverend father Labat.‡

I do not know, Sir, that the radical cure for this evil has yet been diſcovered†, any more than the method

* *Lois.* Liv. 2.

‡ *Nouveau Voyage aux Iſles Françoiſes de L'Amérique.* Tome 2. Chap. 5.

† It may not be without its uſe to ſubjoin the following recipe, extracted from the *Hiſtoire de la Louiſiane.* Tome 1.

"Take

method of preventing great numbers of negroes from indulging that depravity of taſte, which prompts them to devour with the moſt ſenſual avidity, not only carrion, toads, ſnakes, &c. but even earth. This throws them ſpeedily into a kind of maraſmus or conſumption, which baffles all the reſources of the healing art.

Death, however, is not the only event, which deprives the planters of the capital they have ſacrificed to the purchaſe of negroes. The ſpecies of deſertion, here called marooning, is to be found in a greater or leſs degree, upon every eſtate; nor will rigour, kindneſs, or chains, or iron collars ever correct the ſlave who has once addicted himſelf to this kind of life. Their eſcape is ſingularly favoured by the woods, with which ſeveral cantons, and particularly thoſe which border on the Spaniſh poſſeſſions, are ſtill covered; while on the other hand, the want of food, compelling them to hover about the inhabited parts, facilitates the means of retaking them.

" " Take iron-ruſt, reduced to an impalpable powder, and paſſed " through a fine ſieve; moiſten it with citron juice, ſo that it " may have the conſiſtence of ointment, ſpread it on a linen rag, " rubbed over with wheel-greaſe, or freſh lard, and apply it " night and morning."

To

To obviate, as much as poſſible, the inconveniences of deſertion, the negroes are marked on the breaſt with a hot iron, which imprints the name of their maſter, and the pariſh to which he belongs. When they are taken, they are conveyed to the goal of the capital of the diſtrict, and their marks, &c. adverti ſed in the public papers, that they may be reclaimed within a term preſcribed. If this be ſuffered to elapſe they are ſold by auction, and commonly far below (not their value, for it is ſcarcely poſſible to retain them,) but the market price. It is ſeldom that any but poor planters, or bad calculators, ſuch as the greater part of miſers uſually are, ſuffer themſelves to be tempted by the bait of a good bargain.

It is the cuſtom of the coloniſts to eſtimate their income by the number of their ſlaves, reckoning each at fifteen hundred livres; ſo that he who has ſixty, concludes he has ninety thouſand livres a year.

You will find, Sir, in Labat*, a liſt of receipts and expences; from which it appears that in his time, that is, in 1694, when all colonial produce was at a low rate, a ſugar work of one hundred and twenty negroes (the expence of which he eſtimates

* *Nouveau Voyage aux Iſles Françoiſes de L'Amérique.* Tome 4. Chap. 1.

at

at 6,600 livres, and the receipts at 44,640) uſually yielded, every deduction made, a clear annual profit of 38,030 livres. But it ſhould be obſerved that Labat forgets to take into the account, the current waſte of negroes, who muſt be replaced, the deficiences occaſioned by maladies, maroonage, &c. fires, and daily repairs; the mortality of the cattle employed in the carriage of the produce; the ravages of hurricanes, and unprofitable ſeaſons; delays of payment, and the difficulties of exportation during war; and, laſt of all, the exceſſive intereſt the merchants exact for advances, which few of the planters are in a condition to diſpenſe with. From all which I conclude, (not from Labat's calculation, but my own, which reduces the net profit one third) that the proprietor of ſixty blacks has in fact, but ſixty thouſand livres a year: and I ſhould eſteem myſelf happy to poſſeſs, for my whole fortune, what he has leſs than this ſum.

It is extraordinary that the prodigious loſſes to which deſertion and ſickneſs expoſe the planters, ſhould not yet have taught ſome of them to adopt ſuch precautionary meaſures as have a tendency to correct, a part at leaſt, of the evils from which they originate.

The

The general practice is to allot a piece of ground for the erection of the negro-caſas; here on a regular plan; there, ſcattered at random; according to the caprice of the maſter, or the local advantages.

Each of theſe caſas is occupied by three or four ſlaves, abſolutely abandoned to their own intellects, when the proprietors have not the attention to mingle the new-comers with the old—for, let the gang be but a little numerous, and I will defy the moſt active overſight to ſucceed in maintaining order amongſt them, and above all, cleanlineſs, ſo neceſſary to health.

The improvident negro judges of the value of every thing merely by its preſent utility, without any idea of the neceſſity of taking care of it, to prolong its uſe. A perfect contraſt to the man of the ancient poet Regnier, of the

Dilayant qui toujours a l'œil ſur l'avenir;

he will break the veſſel from which he has juſt drank, as we break the ſhell of an egg after having eaten it. Time has no future tenſe for him, he only knows the preſent and the paſt. However ſenſible he may be to certain privations, he is, as I have already told you, incapable of the degree of foreſight which prevents them. He will think no more then, of repairing his caſa, which is tumbling into ruin, than his compatriot the ape thinks of maintaining,

maintaining, by the addition of freſh fuel, the fire at which he warms himſelf with ſo much delight: and ſuch, or nearly ſuch, is every where the character of the man of nature *made perfect* by ſlavery!

Theſe traits of the negro character are familiar to every planter. Why then do the greater part neglect to provide againſt the inconveniences which reſult from them, by a ſyſtem of domeſtic policy adapted to the country, the men, and the circumſtances?

I have reflected a good deal on the beſt mode of eſtabliſhment for the negroes; and in ſpite of its inconveniences, have hit on nothing better than the following; which I ſhould, at leaſt, have attempted to put in practice, if fortune had ever deſtined me to become a planter.

I lay it down as an axiom, that a gang of negroes muſt be looked upon as a body of ſoldiers, who can only be aſſembled, ſupported, and rendered effective, by means of a uniform plan of proceeding, and an exact diſcipline.

Inſtead, then, of diſperſing my negroes in an indeterminate number of caſas, I would unite them in a ſingle one, which ſhould be large, commodious, neat and well aired. I would ſubject them to a proper

a proper regimen, obliging them to meſs together in ſmall parties, like ſoldiers and ſailors.

Thus collected, they would be under the immediate and conſtant inſpection of the driver, the overſeer, and even the maſter: and, conſequently, leſs at liberty to give way to the depravity of their taſte, to the ſpirit of independence ſo natural to every inſulated being, and to thoſe impreſſions of grief and melancholy, which ſolitude is ſingularly calculated to favour, and which bring on a diſguſt of life in too many of them.

Inſtead of allotting them, as is generally the caſe, a portion of ground to cultivate for their own uſe; at the extremity of my poſſeſſions, I would aſſign them a ſpot regularly ſet out, round their habitation, which this encloſure of little gardens would ſingularly embelliſh; to which, if the nature of the ground permitted it, I would add a baſon, or canal, where they ſhould be obliged to bathe themſelves at leaſt once a day: ſince I am perſuaded that the greateſt part of the cutaneous diſeaſes to which they are ſubject, ariſes, in a certain degree, from the neglect of a precaution ſo neceſſary to health in every hot country, that the legiſlators of the Eaſt have made it a religious duty. Even although it had no other advantage than that of leſſening the rank odour which exhales from the negroes

negroes ſkins, and which the connoiſſeurs in fumette compare to that of the houſe-leek, it would ſtill be with me a ſufficient reaſon for attending to it.

The married negroes alone, or ſuch as ſtyle themſelves ſo, ſhould have the privilege of inhabiting a ſeparate caſa, without being permitted, as they now are, to change their wives much oftener than their ſhirts. This prerogative in favour of marriages would neceſſarily encreaſe them, and population would follow.

Beſides Saturday, which is given up to the ſlaves as a day of repoſe, I would inſtitute periodical feſtivals, ſometimes conſecrated to dancing, which they are ſo paſſionately fond of; and ſometimes to public ſports, in which emulation ſhould contend for the prizes ſet apart for the reward of ſuperior ſtrength and dexterity. I would chooſe for theſe purpoſes, the day of my birth, my marriage, my arrival in the iſland, &c.; and doubt not, Sir, but that our common intereſt would be flattered by the relations of kindneſs, and reciprocal attachment, which the connecting of their pleaſures with the moſt intereſting epochs of my life would eſtabliſh between us.

Independent

Independent of the motive of ſecurity which pleads powerfully for the ſyſtem of lodging the negroes in a ſingle houſe, it may be looked upon as an additional obſtacle, not only to the nocturnal viſits which ſome of them are in the habit of making to the neighbouring plantations, but alſo to thoſe ſittings up which engroſs a great part of the night, deprive them of the repoſe neceſſary to recruit their waſted ſtrength, and in a ſhort time completely exhauſt them.

Humanity undoubtedly revolts againſt this exceſſive precaution (of which it is but too often the pretext) when we reflect that the night is the only time we allow the negro to enjoy himſelf—We ſhould ſee with what guſt he reliſhes thoſe moments of tranquillity and freedom! We ſhould hear with what warmth, with what volubility, and at the ſame time, with what preciſion of ideas, with what rectitude of judgment, this being, gloomy and taciturn during the day, and now cowering over his fire, recites, talks, geſticulates, reaſons, judges, approves, or condemns, both his maſter and every thing around him!

It is here that we ſhould obſerve the negro, if we would learn to appreciate him by his own deciſions. Although theſe nocturnal meetings ought not to be tolerated without the greateſt precaution,

I conſtantly

I conſtantly attend them, not to interrupt them, nor to influence their opinions by my preſence, but to collect, under favour of the night, original traits of the character of a ſpecies of men, which, to be well governed, has as much need as our own of being well known; and although, like moſt other eave-droppers, I have ſeldom had the good fortune to hear my own eulogium, I have more than once diſcovered, in the principles by which they judged me, thoſe by which my conduct towards them might conveniently be regulated. It is here, that, fully informed my kindneſs ſometimes paſſed amongſt them for weakneſs, I conceived the neceſſity of replacing it, not by rigour, but by the moſt ſcrupulous juſtice. It is here, that inſtructed of the extravagant opinion they had formed of the infallibility of my judgment, I diſcovered in their very error, the ſecret of inforcing it, by ſuffering them to believe I had found THAT out by mere dint of genius, for which I was ſolely indebted to my ears: in a word, Sir, it is here that a voice, without being conſcious of it, has told me in a thouſand different ways, that FORCE, MODERATED BY INDULGENCE, AND DIRECTED BY JUSTICE, IS THE ONLY EFFICACIOUS METHOD OF CONDUCTING MEN, WHATEVER BE THEIR CONDITION OR THEIR COUNTRY!

LET-

LETTER XXVI.

Deſert,
April 1790.

I FANCIED, Sir, when I ſent off the preceding letter, that I had ſpoken to you, for the laſt time, of the negroes, hoping that what I had ſaid in the courſe of my correſpondence, was ſufficient to enable you to form a decided opinion upon them; but obſerving that you inſiſt at ſome length, in one of your lateſt letters, 1°. On the ideas upon which the negro founds his opinion of the principles of juſtice and injuſtice: 2°. On the true point of view in which we ſhould conſider his mode of exiſtence: and 3°. On the uſe which I imagine he would make of his liberty; I thought it right, inſtead of amuſing, and probably miſleading you by abſtract and metaphyſical ſpeculations, to hazard an experiment, which ſhould put it in my power to decide the firſt queſtion by what may be called material proof.

For this purpoſe, I took advantage of the abſence of the overſeer to announce to the negro driver, that I would take his functions upon myſelf, and conſequently ſuperintend the works. I could not refrain

refrain from ſmiling at the joy this news occaſioned amongſt the negroes; for you will readily ſuppoſe that I was not altogether ignorant of the motive.

As it was now crop time, the engagement I had entered into ſimply conſiſted in examining, at the return of the negroes from the plantation, if each of them had brought home in his baſket the quantity of coffee-berries which had been ſet him as a taſk.

I fully expected what happened the firſt day. My friends the blacks are no leſs ſubject than my friends the whites to confound weakneſs with goodneſs. With the exception of Mazimbo, none of the others brought home a third of their contingent. Without launching out into reproaches, I ordered that every one of them ſhould receive five ſmart laſhes: this was executed under my own eye; and I then declared the puniſhment ſhould be doubled for thoſe that failed on the morrow, tripled for the day after, and ſo on in progreſſion.

All but ſix took the hint; and theſe received the ten laſhes amidſt the hiſſes of their companions. The third day there were only three who were curious enough to try if I would adhere to my reſolution: they could no longer doubt it after receiving

receiving fifteen laſhes each for their negligence, and an additional five for their obſtinacy. My plan, Sir, operated beyond my hopes; for it was now who ſhould exceed the preſcribed meaſure: I therefore thought it neceſſary to recompence my docile pupils for their zeal, by an extraordinary allowance of ſpirits; and ſtill more by placing ſo much confidence in them as to paſs their baſkets thenceforward, with a very ſuperficial inſpection; fully perſuaded that whoever ſhould have been tempted to abuſe it, would have found an informer in each of his companions.

You will eaſily comprehend, that the manner in which I exerciſed this corrective polity, furniſhed them with ample materials for their nocturnal converſations: from this period, however, I thought I could perceive that to the benevolence which many of them already felt for me, was joined a ſentiment of reſpect, intirely independent of the colour which diſtinguiſhed us.

Undoubtedly, if theſe poor creatures had been deſirous of tracing matters to the ſource, and diſcuſſing the right by virtue of which I erected myſelf into a ſupreme arbiter of the uſe of their faculties, they would have diſcovered that I was ſtill very unjuſt in my juſtice: but, more reaſonable in their ignorance, than we in our knowledge, and confounding

confounding power with right; the ſentiment of their utter inability (for ſo they eſteem it) to ſhake off a yoke which they deem, if not legitimate, at leaſt inevitable, ſupplies the place of that rational calculation which ſubjects our individual wills to the expreſſion of the general will, to the law.

A few days after I riſked an experiment, not ill adapted to aſcertain the degree of impreſſion made on them by the rigour to which I had ſeen myſelf ſyſtematically driven; and the alteration it had produced in the attachment they had hitherto borne me.

The architect had left ſo ſmall an interval between the caſa we inhabited, and the ſteep acclivity of the mountain to which it was, as it were, fixed, that upon the leaſt rain, the water which trickled down its ſides completely inundated us. It became then indiſpenſably neceſſary to remedy this inconvenience as ſoon as poſſible, which could only be done by removing, for a ſpace equal to the whole length of the caſa, a portion of the ſlope not leſs than ten or twelve feet in thickneſs. I was the better pleaſed with my plan, as it gave me an opportunity, which I reſolved to ſeize, of transforming the dry and arid ground gained by the operation, between the mountain and the houſe, into a parterre of flowers and verdure.

As

As crop time fell in the rainy ſeaſon, the neceſſity of drying the coffee before it was ſtowed away, required us not to loſe a moment of this precious time: conſequently we were obliged to ſuppreſs the weekly holiday which is every where allowed the negroes.

The work which I had projected might be executed in half a day. I ordered then the driver to propoſe to them, to employ the morning of the enſuing Saturday in clearing away the earth, &c. in return for which, they were to have the reſt of the day to themſelves; and ſeven or eight hours of liberty are not a trifling boon to a ſlave! my propoſition was unanimouſly—rejected: but it was juſt as unanimouſly reſolved, that inſtead of returning to their caſas when the labours of the day were over, as uſual, they would come, and work by the light of the *bois-chandelle* *, (the wood-candle) on my ſlope, as many hours as I thought proper, nay, all the night, if it ſhould be neceſſary.

* I have ſeen many naturaliſts, botaniſts, &c. very much aſtoniſhed, when I have told them of the fine fir trees of Saint Domingo. They were ſo perfectly convinced that this ſpecies of tree was only to be found in the temperate, and polar regions, that they had ſome difficulty to refrain from laughing in my face. 'Tis the wood of this tree which the negroes call *bois chandelle*, and of which they make their torches. For the reſt, I can venture to aſſure the gentlemen that reſinous wood appears to belong ſo peculiarly to the torrid zone, that moſt of the trees of Saint Domingo yield great quantities of gum.

If I was affected by this proof of a devotion to my intereſts, which I had no right to expect; I was ſtill more ſo, by the alacrity with which they undertook, and the promptitude with which they executed the work. Neither the driver, nor myſelf had any occaſion to urge them on; it was who ſhould do the moſt, the beſt, the quickeſt—ſo that what I had imagined would be the labour of more than half a day, was completed in two hours.

Examine well, Sir, whether among the generous actions with which you are acquainted, there are many to be found which ſurpaſs, in true delicacy, this proceeding of a parcel of poor ſlaves; calling to mind at the ſame time, that their natural indolence, and the force which ſubjects them to labour without pay, incline them to look upon every kind of work as a puniſhment.

With reſpect to your ſecond queſtion; an enthuſiaſt would not heſitate to anſwer it by the ſingle word SLAVERY.

It is, however, certain that, thanks to the climate, which reduces their wants to a mere trifle; thanks to education, which leaves them ignorant of rights and enjoyments, of which they can form no idea; thanks to the thoughtleſſneſs of their character,

character, and the fickleneſs of their humour; and, laſtly, to the intereſt which their owners have in their well-doing, the lot of a negro ſlave, all things conſidered, and eſpecially when he has the happineſs of belonging to a maſter, who does not meaſure his humanity by his avarice, is preferable to that of the peaſantry of a great part of Europe.—Let us deſcend to particulars.

Without any other property than the uncertain retribution of an uncertain labour; or with a property which nothing but the moſt active induſtry can render equal to his neceſſities, the ſubſiſtence of the peaſant, and a family, frequently numerous, depends from day to day on accident, on the ſtate of his health, and on a number of circumſtances, which it either is not in his power to foreſee, or which, if foreſeen, prove a new ſource of wretchedneſs. View him alternately humbled by the proſperity, always humiliating, of his equals; by the pride of his ſuperiors; by the compariſon of his poverty with their opulence; and, finally, by all the diſtinctions which compoſe the long chain of ſubordination, of which he is always the laſt link.

He is free, it is true, at leaſt he is taught to believe ſo; but what is this liberty for a man, who,

in whatever direction he attempts to move, is either detained, or puſhed back into the circle of wretchedneſs from which he hoped to eſcape; now by the want of means, which only renders his poverty doubly poignant; and now by the opinion of the world, which makes him but the more ſenſible of his own nullity.

He is, certainly, if not better, at leaſt more clad than the negro: but the negro has no need of cloaths. The habit which with the one is merely an article of luxury, is with the other an object of indiſpenſable neceſſity.

The cottage of the one is larger, and better furniſhed than the caſa of the other; but its reparations, and its moveables alone abſorb no inconſiderable part of his earnings: it muſt be repaired in ſummer, it muſt be warmed in winter.

The one can only provide food and raiment, diſcharge his taxes, &c. with ſpecie, difficult to be procured; but of which the other has no need.

The European by dint of labour, of numerous privations, and of unremitting induſtry, has ſcarcely ſucceeded in acquiring a moment's eaſe, before a melancholy preſage of the future intervenes, and blaſts his fugitive delights. He muſt think of his children,

children, who are growing up, and of old age which is faſt approaching. If he looks round he ſees his own wants multiplied in each of the individuals who call upon him for ſhelter, food, and raiment. If he turns an eye upon himſelf, he beholds the enervated arms which will ſhortly ſupport him no more in the combat he has ſtill to wage with poverty—even after a ſtruggle of threeſcore years!

The negro, too, has his ſufferings; I do not wiſh to deny it: but, exonerated of the care of providing for himſelf for the preſent, and for his family hereafter, he ſuffers leſs from the hardſhips neceſſarily attached to his condition, than from the privation of certain enjoyments.

The unhappineſs of the latter therefore is, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, local and negative: that of the former univerſal and poſitive. It is diffuſed over all his exiſtence, and over all his connections; over the future as well as the preſent. The perception of what he ſuffers, and the remembrance of what he has ſuffered, inceſſantly admoniſh him of the ſufferings he has yet to undergo!

When the negro has eaten his banana he goes to ſleep—and though a hurricane deſtroy the hopes of the planter; though fire conſume the buildings erected

erected at a vaſt expence; though ſubterraneous commotions ingulph whole cities; though the ſcourge of war ſpread devaſtation over our plains, or ſtrew the ocean with the wrecks of our ſcattered fleets—what is all this to him! Enveloped in his blanket, and tranquilly ſeated on the ruins, he ſees with the ſame eye, the ſmoke which exhales from his pipe, and the torrents of flame which devour the proſpects of a whole generation!

I come, Sir, to your laſt queſtion.

You aſk me what uſe I think the negroes would make of their liberty if it were *reſtored* to them?

Reſtored does not appear to me to be the proper word.

All I know, or can diſcover of the natives of Africa, convinces me that they vegetate under a deſpotiſm more or leſs abſurd, or in the moſt deplorable anarchy.

I believe then, Sir, that every people whom education ſhall not have brought up for liberty, will neceſſarily make an ill uſe of that which they may owe to a fortuitous concurrence of circumſtances. See, what you have done with yours! You, a civilized, and enlightened people, habituated

ted to reflect on a faculty, to whose use you have not been altogether strangers; and then take upon yourselves the task of resolving, in the best manner you can, the problem you propounded for my solution.

LETTER XXVII.

Desert,
April 1790.

To exculpate myself, Sir, from the reproach of having bounded my observations on Saint Domingo to futile details, to moral and critical speculations, and to imperfect sketches of cultivation, commerce, and population, I have thought it necessary to attend more seriously to these three last objects, and to treat of them more at large: for surely, Sir, if it imports us to know man, considered as a moral and metaphysical being, it is not of less importance to acquire just ideas of what constitutes his political and material existence, and of his relative interests as a citizen, planter, proprietor, trader, &c.

Let

Let us begin, then, with forming a preciſe notion of the ground on which he diſplays his activity, his intelligence, and his induſtry.

The ſurface of the French part of Saint Domingo meaſures from 1900 to 2000 ſquare leagues.

This extent is divided into three parts or *Coaſts*, heretofore named *Bands*, from the little breadth of the firſt eſtabliſhments; which, in the origin of all the colonies, ſtretched along the ſhore without penetrating into the interior of the country.

Theſe coaſts, or departments, to the number of three, i. e. that of the North, that of the Weſt, and that of the South, are divided into Chefs-Lieux, or Juriſdictions; which, in their turn, are ſubdivided into quarters, or pariſhes, as you will ſee in the following Table.

TABLE.

TABLE.

Chefs-Lieux, or Jurisdictions.		Quarters, or Parishes.	Number of Negroes.
Partie du Nord.	Le Cap.	Le Cap et dependances	21,613
		La petite Ance et la plaine du Nord	11.122
		L'Acul, Limonade, et Sainte Susanne	19,876
		Morin et la Grande Rivière	18,554
		Le Dondon et Marmelade	17,376
		Le Limbé, et le Port Margot	15,978
		Plaisance et le Borgne	15,018
Idem.	Le Fort Dauphin.	Le Fort Dauphin	10,004
		Ouanaminthe et Vallière	9,987
		Le Terrier rouge et le trou	15,476
	Le Port de Paix.	Le Port de Paix, Le Petit St. Louis, Jean Rabel, et Le Gros Morne,	29,540
	Le Mole.	Le Mole et Bombarde	3,183
Partie de l'Oueſt.	Port-au-Prince.	Le Port-au-Prince et la Croix des Bouquets	42,848
		L'Arcahaye	18,553
		Mirebalais	10,902
	Léogane.	Léogane	14,896
	St. Marc.	Saint Marc, la petite Rivière, Les Verettes et les Gonaives	57,216
	Le Petit Goave.	Le Petit Goave, le Grand Goave, et le fond des négres	18,829
		L'Ance á Vaux et le petit trou	13,229
	Jeremie.	Jérémie, et le Cap Dame Marie	20,774
Partie du Sud.	Les Cayes,	Les Cayes et Torbeck	30,937
	Cap Tiburon.	Le Cap Tiburon et les Coteaux	8,153
	St. Louis.	St. Louis, Cavaillon, et Aquin	18,785
	Jacmel.	Jacmel, les Cayes, et Baynel	21,151
Total.		51 Parishes.	450,000

The population of the French territory appears, from an enumeration made this year, exclusive of the

the whites, and negroes, of whoſe reſidence, &c. there were no legal documents, to amount to 38,360 whites; 8,370 people of colour; and 455,000 blacks: to which if we add the crews of the veſſels, the garriſons, &c. we may fairly carry the total of the population to 506,000 ſouls.

In the five laſt years the progreſſive augmentation has been more than 150,000 negroes, ſince at the end of 1785 the colony poſſeſſed only 300,000.

But whatever confidence we may have in the accuracy of an enlightened Adminiſtrator, we muſt ſtill be perſuaded that there are things with regard to which his judgment cannot be looked upon as infallible: in the firſt place, becauſe he is forced to ſee many things by the eyes of others, and conſequently, to make reports the fidelity of which he cannot always verify; in the ſecond, becauſe, in ſpite of all his cares and watching, he cannot determine with perfect exactneſs, the poſitive quantity of the legal importations and exportations of foreigners, nor the amount of the contraband trade, nor the frauds of the French merchants themſelves —Add to this, that as none but an odious, perhaps I might almoſt ſay, an impracticable inquiſition, can ever ſucceed in obtaining an accurate liſt of the black population; the adminiſtrator charged

with

with the enumeration, will always find himſelf obliged to eſtabliſh his eſtimate on approximate calculations.

He may, undoubtedly, certify himſelf from one year to another, of the geometrical extent of the ground in cultivation; but it will be abſolutely impoſſible for him to ſpeak deciſively on the ſpecies of culture, the quantity of produce, or the poſitive value of the exports; becauſe that, the two firſt are ſubject to great variations, that the buyer and the ſeller have an intereſt in defrauding the cuſtoms; that in ſo immenſe a line of coaſt as that of Saint Domingo, it is as impoſſible to prevent ſugars, &c. from being privately ſhipped, as to obſtruct the landing of different articles from interlopers; and, finally, that however carefully the commandants of the different diſtricts, generally planters themſelves, may proceed to the enregiſtering the plantations, they are always deceived, and moſt commonly—I ſpeak from authority—by their own conſent! After this, can you doubt the ſource of the errors which are found in the computations of the moſt clear-ſighted adminiſtrators; and which are all to the advantage of the population, the cultivation, and the commerce of the colony?

If I were obliged, with reſpect to the contrabanders for example, to ſupport my aſſertion by facts,

facts, I could tell you, Sir, that amongſt the artifices they make uſe of to approach, and linger in the road-ſteads of Saint Domingo, there is one, which, although ſtale, is not for that the leſs ſucceſsful.

A ſhip arrives under a pretence of diſtreſs; has her caſe ſtated in a regular verbal-proceſs, and obtains in conſequence of it the neceſſary time for the repairs of which ſhe is ſuppoſed to ſtand in need. Enveloped in the friendly veil of night, the *Verbaliſer* and the *Verbaliſee* come to a *proper* underſtanding: the captain purchaſes in public a maſt or a yard, which he does not want—and a troop of truſty ſlaves do the reſt. The contrabander now *repaired*, continues her rout, and Monſieur the Intendant knows, you may be ſure, as little of the value of what ſhe has brought, as of what ſhe has taken away.

It is very wicked, undoubtedly, to cheat the king in this manner of his dues, and to give, for the ſake of a paltry intereſt, a preference to ſtrangers! It muſt not, however, be concealed that there exiſts one conſideration, not wholly unknown I ſuſpect, to the Chamber of Commerce, which ſometimes induces the planter, even the moſt ſcrupulous with reſpect to the tranſgreſſion of prohibitory laws, to forego without much regret, his repugnance

pugnance to deceive in this manner his *liberal benefactor*—and this conſideration is ſtill "that paltry "intereſt." For example, codfiſh is an article of great conſumption amongſt the negroes: it is, therefore, of conſequence that the colony ſhould be always ſupplied with it. The average demand is from 27,000 to 30,000 quintals; and the French merchants having only imported this ſeaſon 2,610, the government, which begins to comprehend that the general good ſhould not be always ſacrificed to particular advantages, permitted foreigners to import 25,276. This reaſonable indulgence has been ſo much the more beneficial to the coloniſt, as the ſubjects of the United States, on account of their proximity, can ſell their fiſh here in a better condition, and at a much lower price than the French merchants *: the latter, therefore, neceſſarily alarmed, and fearing government might carry its condeſcenſion for the colonies ſo far as to permit, from the ſame motive, the importation of ſalt proviſions, have eagerly ſet themſelves to decry thoſe of North America; whoſe brine, ſay they, has not, like ours, the qualities neceſſary to preſerve what

* If theſe people would take proper meaſures for ſending by a direct rout from Newfoundland to the colonies, a quantity of fiſh equal to the demand, the planters might undoubtedly have it cheaper and of a better quality: but the unfortunate habitude of conſidering the iſlands as mere drains for the corruptions of the mother country, makes them ſee nothing in them but common ſewers deſtined to abſorb the refuſe of their magazines.

is

is pickled in it! It is clear to me that if among the number of other articles of American commerce, ſuch as iron, flour, cattle, &c. lumber alone has eſcaped the depreciating ſentence of our traders *, the indulgence is intirely owing to the difficulty of ſupplying the demand, which the increaſed cultivation of ſugar has nearly doubled within the laſt fifteen years.

The number of foreign ſhips, principally American, which in 1788 aſſiſted in furniſhing Saint Domingo with proviſions, was conſiderable. Now, Sir, if in conformity to the wiſhes of the Chamber of Commerce, the ports of the iſland had been ſhut to them, what would have been the conſequence to the inhabitants?—that they would have been in abſolute want of many articles of the firſt neceſſity, which compoſed the whole cargoes of theſe veſſels.

" And what is that to us," ſay the French merchants? " Can the pleaſure of gratifying a few ima-

* It is to the Genius of commerce, *perfected* to a certain point, that we muſt look for the ſource of thoſe vices whoſe origin has ſo long puzzled us. It is this which, having ruined Tyre, Carthage, &c. took refuge in Italy, and brought us from Florence that miſerable Italian policy, which after having taught us to ſpeculate on every thing, even on virtue and on vice, has ended with precipitating Europe into the profoundeſt abyſs of corruption, into egoiſm!

ginary

ginary wants be ſuffered to enter into competition with the real wrong which is done to the mother country, in thus depriving her of the profits ſhe muſt have made of the merchandize you have ſold to foreigners? How long, pray, has it been the faſhion to ſtrip the mother to clothe the daughter! And are not the colonies the daughters of France? Beſides, there is a commercial maxim from which we cannot derogate, and which, in ſpite of our inability to take off all your produce, makes it highly neceſſary that it ſhould be offered to no one elſe—this maxim is, that the leſs competition there happens to be, the more the various productions of the ſoil will accumulate in the magazines of the planter, and the more it will be in our power to beat down their price"—For the reſt, Sir, whatever Avidity, which always fancies it has loſt what another has gained, may be pleaſed to ſay, it is certain that the want of ſpecie, which is felt more than ever in the United States at this moment, on account of their direct commerce with China and the Eaſt Indies; it is certain, I ſay, that this want obliges the Americans to take piaſtres for their commodities in preference to the produce of the iſlands; of which they carry off no more than is abſolutely neceſſary for ballaſt. Thus, it appears that the injury they do our carrying trade is ſcarce worth noticing—but were it greater, were it even as momentous as it is ſaid to be, I ſhould think it

more

more than compenſated by the advantages the colonies derive from them.—But tell me, Sir, if it does not appear ſtrange to you that a body of ſpeculators, who are inceſſantly claiming for themſelves the moſt unbounded privileges, ſhould recognize no other rule of action than that of the moſt revolting deſpotiſm in their dealings with the planter, or the manufacturer, who is not abſolutely their ſlave !——It is neceſſary to comprehend thoroughly how aſtoniſhingly perſonal intereſt perverts every idea of juſtice and injuſtice, to enable us to ſee nothing in all this but the inevitable effect of its influence on our feeble reaſon.

LET-

LETTER XXVIII.

Deſert,
April 1790.

FIVE important objects, Sir, will furniſh materials for this letter: 1°. The exportation; 2°. The eſtabliſhments appropriated to cultivation, manufactories, and induſtry; 3°. The produce of the taxes in general; 4°. The debts active and paſſive; and 5°. The revenue of the treaſury, and its diſtribution into different departments.

To avoid the tedious calculation of fractions, the reſult of which after all, cannot be of any importance, I ſhall diſpenſe with adding the ſous and deniers to the total of each article. I ſhould previouſly inform you that the valuation is made on the footing of the colonial exchange at preſent, that is, at $33\frac{1}{2}$; ſo that the livre muſt be eſtimated at thirty ſous. *

* As it would be difficult to find in Engliſh correſponding terms for the legal and official phraſeology which repeatedly occurs in this letter, the tranſlator has contented himſelf with merely copying the original.

EXPORTATION.

1788.		1789.	Average Value.
93,177,512 lbs.	Muſcovado Sugar	93,573,300	55,000,000
70,227,709 ——	Clayed Sugar	47,516,531	67,670,781
68,151,181 ——	Coffee ——	76,835,219	51,890,748
6,286,126 ——	Cotton ——	7,004,278	17,572,252
930,016 ——	Indigo ——	758,628	10,875,120
150,000 ——	Cocoa ——	——	120,000
29,530 hhds.	Molaſſes ——	——	1,947,132
303 Caſks	Rum ——	——	21,816
12,995 No.	Hides ——	——	172,218
1,500,000 lbs.	Dying Woods	——	40,000
5,000 ——	Tortoiſe ſhell	——	50,000
		Total	205,370,067

ESTABLISHMENTS.

The maſs of commodities which is produced by the joint efforts of cultivation, commerce, and induſtry, ariſes from

1788.	1789.	Eſtimation.
451 Plantations of Clayed, or White Sugar	451	103,730,000
341 Muſcovado ditto	362	100,000,000
2,810 Coffee eſtates —	3117	70,200,000
705 Cotton ditto —	789	30,000,000
3,097 Indigo works —	3151	100,000,000
69 Cocoa groves —	54	900,000
173 Diſtilleries —	182	200,000
3 Tan pits —	6	950,000
313 Lime-kilns —	370	6,600,000
28 Potteries —	29	
33 Brick-kilns —	36	
12,000 Horned Cattle		1,400,000
16,000 Horſes and Mules		6,440,000
	Total	420,420.000

If

If we add to theſe different items, 1,137,500,000 livres, for the value of 455,000 ſlaves, the whole of the fixed and moveable property of the planters of Saint Domingo will amount to the ſurprizing ſum of 1,557,870,000 livres.

AMOUNT OF THE TAXES ON COLONIAL PRODUCE.

Of that on White Sugar	—	2,528,197 Livres.
Brown Sugar	—	1,677,195 ———
Coffee —	—	1,226,720 ———
Indigo —	—	465,000 ———
Cotton —	—	785,766 ———
Molaſſes	—	221,275 ———
Rum —	—	1,821 ———
Hides —	—	18,184 ———
Dying woods, &c.	———	
Total		6,924,166

which are compriſed in the receipt of the *Caiſſe de la Marine*, or Marine Cheſt.

It would be a tedious, and indeed a needleſs affectation of accuracy, to enter article by article into all the details of the General Receipt of the Treaſury. I ſhall content myſelf, therefore, with laying before you the total of the ſums received, and paid into the ſeveral Offices. If I enter at greater length into the article of expence, it will

be merely to do juſtice to the views of Adminiſtration by diſtinguiſhing the ſums employed by it in various inſtitutions, in works of public utility, or in acts of juſtice and benevolence.

GENERAL RECEIPT.

	Livres. *
La Caiſſe de la Marine has received	10,838,348
—— Generale — —	1,171,290
—— des Libertés ——	694,906
—— des Droits Domaniaux	780,300
—— des Conſignations —	184,500
—— de L' Entrepôt —	459,078
—— des Invalids, et fonds d'Armements -	584,592
Total	14,673,014

As the real ſtate of the active and paſſive debts of a country is indiſpenſably neceſſary to enable you to form a correct opinion of its commercial, agricultural, and financial ſituation, I have joined an exact liſt of thoſe of the colony.

* As there is a ſenſible difference between the reſult of the totals of the *Compte Rendu* of M. de Marbois, and the *Tables* of his ſucceſſor, I have followed the laſt as being the lateſt in time.

ACT-

ACTIVE DEBTS,

or

MONIES OWING TO THE DIFFERENT CAISSES,
from 1788 to 1791.

The total amount of the public credit ſtood in 1788 at 14,927,030 livres.

Of this there was paid in 1789 and 1790 the ſum of 5,730,901 livres, which reduced the debt to 9,196,129 livres.

PASSIVE DEBTS,

or

MONIES OWED BY THE DIFFERENT CAISSES.

	Livres.
The public debt amounted in 1788 to	4,942,416
There were paid in 1789 and 1790	3,580,480
Will remain due in 1791	1,361,936

It is natural enough to ſuppoſe, Sir, that in the accompts delivered in by the Adminiſtrators, the total of the diſburſements ſeldom fails to tally exactly with the total of the receipts: this is in the regular courſe of things—and it is not every where one

one has the ſatisfaction of ſeeing the public revenues ſo well adminiſtered as to leave, as they did here, a ſurplus of 1,614,888 livres, at the year's end.

If you now aſk me, where the agents of government find the means of acquiring ſuch rapid fortunes, I ſhall ingenuouſly own to you that I know not: but at the ſame time I have very little doubt if the Director of the Fortifications, and other works, were, for example, to receive 917,560 livres for thoſe objects, but that the total of his expences would alſo amount to 917,560 livres!

It may be a matter of indifference to you to be informed that the military, civil and judicial adminiſtration of the colony abſorbs, in ſalaries alone, 3,349,550 livres; but you will ſee with pleaſure, that of the overplus of the general receipts of 14,673,014 livres, there have been expended, either in public works, or in donations of juſtice and benevolence, the following ſums.

On

On the Hoſpitals	— —	196,000 *livres.*
Canals and Fountains	—	331,299
Indemnities and Gratifications		109,575
Penſions to the fathers and mothers of 10 and 12 children — —	}	71,769
Expences of a Quay at Port-au-Prince — —	}	72,731
The Road at Jaquemel	—	86,621
The King's Garden	—	50,912
Works done at the Cape	—	70,464
Watering and Waſhing Places —	}	651,058
Gifts and Gratifications	—	40,956
Reclaiming run-away negroes		46,521
	Total	1,727,902

LETTER XXIX.

Deſert, May 1790.

AMONGST the queſtions, Sir, which philoſophy amuſes itſelf with diſcuſſing, one of the leaſt idle is undoubtedly that of the influence which education, climate, and government ſucceſſively have on man. But it is with this, as with the cauſe of

of earthquakes: let us have nothing excluſive, and we ſhall underſtand one another.

Man is at one and the ſame time a moral, phyſical, and ſocial being; and, as ſuch, directly ſubject to the influence of education, climate, and government.

It is always then, not under the one or the other of theſe relations, but under the three united, that he ſhould be conſidered: for, if he be no where excluſively the man of nature, education, or laws, he is however, every where, more or leſs, the one or the other.

What is then the inhabitant of Saint Domingo?

That which every man muſt be who is born under a burning atmoſphere, with a vicious education, and a feeble government. His character has no decided traits; he is neither corrupt, nor virtuous; neither citizen, nor ſlave. But this character will form itſelf the inſtant education and government, in concert with nature, ſhall occupy themſelves with the care of giving him morals. At preſent we ought to ſet the higher value upon his good qualities, as his education has hitherto been calculated to give him none but bad ones.

I ſhould

I ſhould engage myſelf in a very long, a very abſtruſe, and a very uſeleſs work, if I undertook to ſay how education and government, in ſtrict conformity with nature, ought to labour to form the moral character, and decide the political exiſtence of the coloniſts, agreeable to principles founded on the inevitable influence of the climate, and on the odious ſyſtem which flings diſhonour here on the moſt uſeful, the moſt univerſal of the arts; that which the author of the *Ami des Hommes* * calls, with ſo much reaſon, the "art of innocence and "virtue;" by confiding it to degraded beings, whoſe labours, on that very account, it becomes impoſſible to participate, without participating at the ſame time, (at leaſt in their opinion) the nullity, meanneſs, and diſgrace to which they are condemned.

No one has ever denied agriculture the precious advantage of maintaining the morals which a ſedentary life, luxury, and ſloth, neceſſarily corrupt. Here, then, is a reſource already loſt to the legiſlature; and, conſequently, a new motive for ſupplying its abſence by education.

The moſt ſhocking contradictions have no longer any thing ſtriking in them, when a perſon has once

* Tome 1. Chap. 7.

loſt

loſt ſight of a certain number of immutable truths. Hence the coloniſt who would bluſh to work with his negreſs, does not bluſh to live with her in a ſtate of intimacy, which neceſſarily eſtabliſhes between them a kind of equality, at which prejudice exclaims in vain :

L'âne repond, l'amour égale tout.

To no purpoſe did the legiſlator, in the origin of the colonies, attempt to obviate one of the moſt fatal conſequences of ſlavery, by ſubjecting to a penalty of two thouſand pounds of refined ſugar, every white convicted of having a child by a negreſs. This inconſequent and immoral law was quickly repealed on account of the abortions it occaſioned: but I am ignorant whether government drew from the tranſaction the proper inference—that it is abſurd to think of applying laws preſervative of good morals to an order of things againſt nature.

Suppoſing, for a moment, this abuſe of intimacy between the maſter and the ſlave ſhould have no other inconvenience than weakening the firſt principle of all ſubordination, the reſpect of the ſubordinate, it would even then be a great calamity. Elſewhere this reſpect might be replaced by eſteem; but eſteem is the firſt ſtep towards equality. To eſteem,

eſteem, it is neceſſary to judge, and the ſlave ought not to judge his maſter.

But a far more pernicious conſequence of this abuſe is its influence on the education of the children, for whom example is a leſſon much more eaſy to be retained than precepts, always at variance with the conduct of him who gives them. If, as they ſay, "wit cannot be taught by rule," much leſs can virtue.

It is a matter, Sir, in which we are not much intereſted, to know whether we are born virtuous or vicious: the point of real importance is to enable education to favour the developement of the good, in proportion as it repreſſes that of the bad, whoſe ſeeds, however they come, manifeſt themſelves in us from the moment of our birth.

Very few fathers, even with the aſſiſtance of the beſt treatiſes on education, are in a condition to ſuperintend that of their children. The greater part of them beget young ones without embarraſſing themſelves about making them one day men. Add to this, that I do not know, with the exception of *Emilius*, any theory which goes beyond a mere phyſical education. The true ſecret of moral education is eaſily divined*: it conſiſts in never offering

* What in the name of wonder can the Marquis de Langle "mean

ing to our children any but good models to follow. If this principle were generally adopted, it muſt neceſſarily enſue, as it is the diſpoſition of mankind to improve on what is already done, that the manners of the human race would be ameliorated.

To tell you what ſhould be done to inſure the children of Saint Domingo a good education, would be to tell you preciſely every thing that is not done at preſent. What, for example, can we expect from the impious cuſtom of giving them to be ſuckled by negro women, who, however well choſen we may ſuppoſe them, and however carefully watched, ſeldom reach the period of weaning without communicating to the infant they nouriſh, the venom of a corrupted milk, and the vices of a temperament to whoſe laſcivious and fiery nature, a forced continence has but added freſh fuel! The nurſling of the wolf of Latium neceſſarily became the leader of a band of robbers who *preluded*, by the rape of the Sabines, to the conqueſt of the univerſe. What can we expect, Sir, from the culpable negligence which abandons the children to the ſociety of a troop of domeſtic ſlaves, who have not the moſt diſtant idea of the ſenſe attached to the word modeſty! What can we expect from

mean by ſaying that "a moral education is an impoſſibility, a "wild and extravagant idea." See "*Mon Voyage en Eſpagne.*" Tome 2. Page 139.

the

the diſorder of public morals, the licentiouſneſs of converſation, and the daily habitude of ſeeing puniſhments inflicted, of which the leaſt ſhocking part is the barbarity! To ſum all, what can we expect from the influence of an education begun and finiſhed in places where modeſty, goodneſs, juſtice, and mercy are empty ſounds; and where the firſt words which the young Creole learns to liſp, are a command to lacerate with whips the boſom of his nurſe!

Theſe conſiderations have not eſcaped ſuch of the coloniſts as are capable of appreciating the advantage of a better education: but, either from incapacity, or idleneſs, they have diſcovered no better remedy for the evil than ſending their children to France; as if it was not juſt as improper to educate the children of Saint Domingo at Paris, as it would be to educate the children of Paris at Saint Domingo!

This is ſurely running upon Sylla to avoid Charybdis. What has the French education in common with the kind of life which is led in the colonies? The plantations where theſe children are born, and where they are deſtined to live, differ as much from the convent or college to which they are ſent, as the productions of the new world from thoſe of the old. How is it poſſible that their conſtitutions,

ſtitutions, formed by a mode of living, and under an atmoſphere ſo different from thoſe which await them, ſhould not ſuffer a material change by this ſudden tranſition from one to the other? I look, Sir, on the practice of generalizing, to a certain degree, the principles of a phyſical education, as a direct violation of nature. Allowing it to be advantageous for a vagabond to habituate himſelf to every climate; ſtill the man who is doomed to live on the ſoil which his anceſtors have cultivated, and to die where he was born, ought to have no other regimen, no other temperament than thoſe of his native country. How would the Laplander, brought up under the equator, be able to live amidſt the eternal ice of the pole?—Wretched, alas! is he, whom his mother placed in an oaken cradle, and whom mercenary hands have buried in a coffin of mahogany!

What may ſerve to juſtify in ſome meaſure the inhabitants of Saint Domingo on this head, is the privation of every kind of reſource, of every eſtabliſhment adapted to give their children a certain portion of inſtruction, of uſeful knowledge, of agreeable accompliſhments. However ſuperfluous theſe acceſſory ornaments of the education of the rich may be eſteemed elſewhere, I regard them as highly neceſſary in a country where population, thinly ſcattered, compels the greateſt part

part of the coloniſts to live in a kind of ſolitude, which expoſes them to all the evils of liſtleſſneſs and ennui.

People do not ſufficiently reflect, Sir, on the tyranny theſe two peſts of human kind exerciſe over the morals. They forget that it was for the purpoſe of withdrawing the croud from their influence, the legiſlators of antiquity inſtituted ſo many feaſts and public games.

On the other hand, when activity, which is one of our firſt paſſions, can find no other object than pleaſure, the abuſe of it will ſpeedily change the paſſion into habit, and give birth to diſguſt, and ſatiety, and to all the turpitude of a depraved and ſickly mind. It is then the deareſt of our intereſts, our proper happineſs, which points out to us the preſervation of good morals as the ſource of all our enjoyments.

To recommend, however, the cultivation of the arts, of agreeable talents, of uſeful knowledge, will probably appear ſtrange to the ſectaries of that celebrated man who, in the too famous queſtion of their influence on the happineſs of ſociety, boldly declared for the negative—But let not the partiſans of the opinion, that arts corrupt the morals, be too much

much alarmed: there is nothing to corrupt at Saint Domingo!

Thoſe who affected at the time to conſider the ſentiment of the citizen of Geneva as a paradox, no leſs new than ſingular, muſt ſurely have deſignedly forgotten that Solon, happening to be preſent at the repreſentation of one of Theſpis' pieces, cried out, long before him, "I am afraid theſe "poetic fictions, theſe ingenious deceptions, will "ſpeedily paſs from the ſtage into real life;" and that Xenophon had written two thouſand years before Rouſſeau was born, "that the greater part of "the arts enfeeble the bodies of thoſe who exer-"ciſe them, by compelling them to ſit in the ſhade, "or by the fire; and that they have neither leiſure "for their friends, nor for the republic." *

The confuſion this famous queſtion occaſioned, muſt be wholly attributed to the incorrect manner in which it was ſtated by the academy of Dijon. I am ignorant, for my own part, of the tendency which arts and ſciences have to corrupt the morals; but I well know, that, cauſe or effect, they are no where in eſtimation but amongſt nations already much corrupted. In this caſe, they muſt be looked upon as uſeful, becauſe, being unable to deteriorate

* *Memorabilia.* Liv. 5.

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the manners, they ſerve, if not to amend, at leaſt to ſoften them.

This is, I believe, the moſt rational view of the ſubject: at any rate it is that of Cicero, whoſe teſtimony cannot be ſuſpected. Give the moſt auſtere philoſopher, the moſt inflexible ſtoic, the moſt impudent cynic, the choice of living with men unpoliſhed, ignorant and corrupt, or with men corrupt, polite, and well informed, and he will not hesitate a moment to take the latter. "I ſaw," ſays the ſucceſſor of the unfortunate Marion, "I "ſaw him maſſacred by a people at once cruel and "cowardly, treacherous and ungrateful; and who "had received from him nothing but benefits. I "have ſeen that reaſon without cultivation is but "a mere inſtinct, more brutal and ferocious than "that of beaſts: I have found nothing in theſe "men of nature but miſchievous children, ſo much "the more dangerous as they are uſually ſtronger "than the generality of the moſt robuſt Europeans. "I have obſerved them in the ſpace of a few mi-"nutes, paſs from the moſt childiſh joy to the "deepeſt grief; from tranquillity to fury, and from "thence to the moſt immoderate laughter. I have "ſeen them, alternately, and with no perceptible "interval, gentle and fawning, then ſtern and

" threatening; never long in the ſame frame " of mind, but always dangerous, always trea- " cherous." *

After this digreſſion, which is not altogether foreign to the ſubject, I think, Sir, you will not heſitate to agree with me, that it is almoſt impoſſible the young Creoles of either ſex ſhould receive in their paternal habitations, or even in France, an education which ſhall at once unite the advantages of the phyſical and moral—What can be done then to obviate the evil?—Something very ſimple; ſomething which would have been done long ſince, if the leaſt ſpark of public ſpirit had exiſted in the country.

Let there be founded in Saint Domingo itſelf, eſtabliſhments for the education of the children of Saint Domingo.

The advantages of theſe kinds of eſtabliſhments are ſo numerous and ſo deciſive, that nothing but the moſt culpable indifference, united to the blindeſt ignorance, could have prevented the inhabitants from recognizing, many years ago, their indiſpenſible neceſſity.

* *Nouveau Voyage à la Mer du Sud.* Page 129.

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LETTER XXX.

Deſert,
May 1790.

IT is with the inhabitants of our colonies, Sir, as with the ſoldiers with whom Alexander over-ran Perſia; the conquerors have aſſumed the manners of the conquered. The coloniſts have preferred the diſgrace of adopting thoſe of the ſlaves to the merit of giving them better. But an aſſertion of this nature will bring upon me a charge of calumny unleſs ſubſtantiated by facts.

In France, for example, the maſter of a houſe will look upon himſelf as inſulted if you get his maid with child; here he will thank you, as for the beſt piece of ſervice you can do him: for this child becomes his property, and conſequently adds ſomething to his capital.

Should the feelings of a father operate ſo ſtrongly as to incline you to withdraw your ſon from the ſlavery to which he is deſtined by the Roman Law, *Partus ſequitur ventrem,* he will ſell him to you for ſo much down upon the nail, but with the eſpecial

precaution of regulating the price by the anxiety you ſhew to obtain him. If you do not buy him, his maſter will not fail to have him brought up to ſome occupation; by means of which he may be enabled to let him out, or ſell him, or to put him in a condition of buying himſelf on ſome future day, that is, of paying the price of his liberty.

The girls are a more valuable commodity than the boys, becauſe, excluſive of the trades they may be taught, if they have the ſmalleſt pretenſions to beauty, they have no great need of abilities to excite, amongſt the unmarried whites, an emulation which aſſures them a price impoſſible to aſcertain, ſince it is love, and what is more, ſelf-love, which determines it.——Rivals of the ſon of Alcmena! would you ſee the Genius of commerce cover the ſhores of Saint Domingo with altars to your name? Imitate, then, that labour of the hero's, which in one night gave the good old Danaus fifty grand-children!

The only thing that aſtoniſhes ſuch as experience has appriſed of the innumerable reſources ſtruck out by a certain kind of induſtry, is—that it has not yet entered into the head of ſome ingenious ſpeculator to monopolize, under the name of *Etalon Banal*, Colonial Stallion, the fabrication of all the people of colour at ſo much a head. Perhaps they

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are afraid leſt the Chamber of Commerce ſhould take advantage of the luminous idea, and add to their other *excluſive privileges*, that of manufacturing the human race. I do not think their fears are altogether without foundation, for there would be no more injuſtice in preventing the coloniſts from begetting their own children, than in prohibiting them from refining their own ſugar, or ſpinning their own cotton!

From what I have ſaid, Sir, you muſt be fully convinced that what impoveriſhes the rich with you enriches the poor with us; that lechery, which in France is at once a mortal ſin, and a ruinous paſſion, is metamorphoſed here into a ſource of lucrative ſpeculations; that one of the methods of acquiring a fortune at Saint Domingo, is to beget a number of baſtards; and, finally, that this branch of the public proſperity is founded on the very vice which ſaps the foundation of all ſociety elſewhere—on the want of good morals!

There are to be found here, particularly in the port-towns, a number of whites, and free mulattoes who make a great deal of money, merely by letting out their male or female negroes. Avarice has even extended its power over the pleaſures of love; for juſt as a ſervant-maid in Europe aſks her miſtreſs's permiſſion to walk out, ſo a negro woman here,

here, aſks leave to go and ſleep with ſuch or ſuch a white: and as ſhe is obliged, in many houſes, to pay her miſtreſs a certain ſum out of the produce of her nocturnal labours, you will conceive that the miſtreſs, who, from a principle of decency, refuſes ſuch a permiſſion, would expoſe herſelf to the weighty reproach of being a bad œconomiſt; ſince the negro ſervant-girls have nothing but what they gain by their *charms* to cover *them* from the public eye.—Thus modeſty is indebted here for its veil to laſciviouſneſs!

Let us, however, be juſt, Sir.—This vice cannot be looked upon as peculiar to the French colonies, nor as a conſequence of the ſtill-increaſing depravity of our morals. More than a century ago, the traveller Dellon found the ſame practice completely eſtabliſhed at the Bay of All Saints; "where," ſays he, "even the women who paſs for virtuous, make no "ſcruple to trick out their ſlaves for the purpoſe "of enabling them to ſet a higher price on the "infamous pleaſures in which they traffic." *

When avarice is the firſt principle of the depravity of morals, nothing but the intervention of the government and of religion can poſſibly ſet bounds to it; and when theſe two are arrived at ſuch a

* *Relation d'un Voyage aux Indes Orientales.* Tome 2. Chap. 28.

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pitch of blindneſs as not to ſee that their exiſtence is inſeparably connected with the exertion of this prime duty, it is perfectly needleſs to look for the ſolution of the problem of a ſociety without morals, any where but in Bareme. *

That the Civil Adminiſtration, eſſentially charged with the police, ſhould buſy itſelf with every thing but the care of ſuperintending the ſtate of morality, ought to aſtoniſh no one. Governments have never known how to preſerve a juſt medium between the indifference which ſuffers every thing to run to decay, and the inquiſition which takes every thing into its own hands. "And yet," ſays the Abbé de Mably, "whatever our great philoſophers may "advance, all depends upon the morals; and the "deeper you ſearch into the operations of politics, "the more you will be convinced of it." †

But that religion, or rather its miniſters, ſhould conſent to ſhare this reproach, is what could hardly have been expected, when we conſider with what anxiety they have always watched, with what eagerneſs they have always ſeized, every opportunity of extending, with the influence of their miniſtry,

* A celebrated Calculator.

† *De la Legiſlation, ou Principes des Lois.* Tome 1. Liv. 2. Chap. 4.

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the power of which it is the reſult, and the degree of conſequence attached to that power. ‡

The clergy of the colony ſeem to have voluntarily renounced the advantages which this ſyſtem of conduct procures them elſewhere. Tranquil in their parſonage-houſes, they ſpend in peace an income ſufficiently large to enable them to live comfortably. Maſs is celebrated one way or other, in churches where none go to hear it—ſo that to avoid the reproach of preaching in the deſert they do not preach at all. Still leſs do they exert themſelves to awaken, by private exhortations, the languiſhing, not to ſay the expiring zeal of their flocks.

I am perſuaded, Sir, that there are to be found amongſt them men of real merit: at the ſame time truth obliges me to avow they are not numerous; becauſe the ſuperior clergy, who nominate to the

‡ It is to this ambition, ill diſguiſed, that we muſt attribute the diſgraceful manner in which after a long toleration, the Jeſuit miſſionaries were finally driven from China. We may ſee, in the ſecond voyage of Father Gerbillon, with what inſolence men who preached, and who, in effect, ought to have known, no other revenge than pardoning injuries, after receiving from the government every kind of ſatisfaction they could deſire for a ſlight inſult offered to one of them, ſtill dared to demand of the emperor, who had overwhelmed them with kindneſs, the puniſhment of the municipal officers of Canton, even to the mandarin who was confeſſedly innocent.—But the monarch had the good ſenſe to refuſe them.

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vacant benefices, have contracted the pernicious habit of ſending none thither but ſuch intriguing or ſuſpicious characters as they wiſh to be rid of. The flambeau of faith, therefore, entruſted to ſuch hands, can only ſhed a faint and doubtful light in regions which the South inflames with all its fires! To ſpeak my mind freely on the ſubject, nothing, generally ſpeaking, can be more irregular than the regular clergy of Saint Domingo, compoſed, in a great meaſure, of monks who have renounced their order. Never did the celebrated ſaying of Saint Paul, that "*Strength is made perfect in weakneſs*," offer to true piety a more conſolatory hope for the future! In the interim, the conjectures which public ſcandal delights to indulge on the children with which the female mulatto of Monſ. the Rector may have peopled the parſonage-houſe, keep their courſe; and as this increaſe of family is for his Reverence, as well as for the reſt of the coloniſts, a ſenſible increaſe of fortune, you may eaſily comprehend, that in the intereſted age in which we live, few will have the candour to ſuppoſe he is indebted for them ſolely to the good will of his pariſhioners.

I do not know, however, if indifference, the force of habit, that of example, and above all, the power of opinion, which looks upon continence to be a virtue ſo painful, ſo foreign from the manners,

ners, and climate of Saint Domingo, that impotence itſelf diſbelieves in it; I do not know, I ſay, whether all this united, may not balance the effect of a ſcandal, (which one has always the reſource of attributing to calumny) ſufficiently ſo, at leaſt, to enable the clergy to preſerve ſome portion of the veneration of which they ſtand ſo much in need, by permitting us to ſuppoſe that the reſt of their conduct correſponds to the dignity and importance of their holy profeſſion. People are too much engaged here with their own affairs, to inquire minutely into what paſſes with others. Slander is the danghter of Idleneſs. One thing, however, no perſon can be ignorant of—that amongſt the miniſters of the God of Truth, men are to be found wicked enough to diſpute the palm of cunning with the African jugglers, by perſuading the credulous negro, that for a certain ſum, which is always paid beforehand, they can enable him to recover the moveable he has loſt, or the pullet which the rats have long ſince devoured.

There is no opinion, Sir, of a more deceitful and fatal nature than that which maintains the poſſibility of a ſociety having a code of morality which ſhall ſupply the place of religion. It is the abuſe of the latter joined to a ſpirit of independence, which has given birth to an error as novel as it is alarming. The moſt enlightened nations, the moſt perfect

fect ſocieties, have from the beginning of time, and from one end of the world to the other, recognized the neceſſity of a mode of worſhip, ſupported by a ſymbol of faith, or creed, implicitly adopted. Sparta did not rely ſo intirely on the goodneſs of her laws, on the virtues of her citizens, but that ſhe was ſtill anxious to have the Gods for her protectors. The laſt act of the wiſeſt of men was a religious one.—To believe, is as neceſſary to us all, as it is natural; but to reaſon well is the lot of few: and I know of no ſyſtem of religion whoſe fundamental principles do not perfectly accord with univerſal morality, or the deareſt intereſts of ſociety. Fanaticiſm, which has armed one form of worſhip againſt another; intolerance, which has given birth to ſo many ſects, never had, from the firſt, any other origin than pride or ſelf-love, which have ſtruggled to ſubſtitute their opinion for that of the legiſlator, and their particular intereſt for the general good of the whole.

It is then the duty of government to take care, on one ſide, that religion be maintained and reſpected; and on the other, that it never become, in the hands of its miniſters, a means of oppreſſing or miſleading the people. Every legiſlator who permits the public morals to be in open contradiction with the principles of religion, infallibly deſtroys both the one and the other, and with them himſelf.

himſelf. But how much more dangerous muſt this depravation of morals be, when the clergy themſelves are tainted with it! It is then that the multitude paſſes, without any intermediate ſtep, from contempt of the miniſters to that of the worſhip; and from contempt of the worſhip to that of the laws. Every ſcandalous prieſt is a conſpirator.—It is true, that an apoſtolic vicar is ſometimes (though very rarely) ſent to inſpect the conduct of miniſters: but this inſpector may be a very worthy and ingenious man, and yet his authority, which does not extend beyond the period of his miſſion, be inſufficient to remedy the original defect, which I conceive to be the want of proper care in the choice of the colonial clergy.

With reſpect to religious inſtitutions, it is not enough, Sir, that the principles be good, and the dogmas pure: he who labours to propagate them, muſt alſo ſhew, in his own perſon, an example of the ſtricteſt conformity to them: for people in general believe no more in the doctrines of thoſe who affect, themſelves, to diſregard them, than in the virtues which are preached by men tainted with every vice. As long as I ſhall ſee the *fiſherman's ring* on the finger of a ſovereign prince, and the bald front of the *Servant of the Servants of God*,

God, decorated with a triple crown *, it will be difficult to convince me that humility is a quality neceſſary to ſalvation.

LETTER XXXI.

Deſert,
June 1790.

YOUR laſt pacquet, Sir, incloſing the miniſter's letter for Monſ. de Marbois, was juſt put into my hands, when I learned that, having received information that an exaſperated mob was haſtening from Cape François to Port-au-Prince, for the expreſs purpoſe of ſeizing his perſon, he had judged it prudent to withdraw himſelf, and accordingly embarked with his family for France. †

His

* It was John XXII. who firſt aſſumed the Tiara, or triple crown, in virtue of his being Dominator cœleſtium, terreſtrium, et infernorum.

† The conduct of this Monſ. Barbé de Marbois affords a ſingular inſtance of the verſatility of the human mind. Execrated in the colony which he adminiſtered, for his ſervile attachment to what

His oppoſition to the beneficent views of Monſ. du Chillau, by compelling that governor to return to Paris, for the defence of a cauſe ſuppoſed to be inſeparably connected with the public proſperity, had long ſince raiſed a general indignation againſt him. I am very much afraid that the conſequences of this miſunderſtanding between the two Adminiſtrators will be extremely prejudicial to the country. Monſ. Du Chillau, perhaps, has been a little too precipitate; ſince it is univerſally agreed that if he had choſen to avail himſelf of the confidence he had inſpired, he might have forced his competitor to retire; and there can be no doubt but that in the preſent ſtate of things, the ſalvation of the colony imperiouſly requires the whole power to be concentered in the hands of a man, who to the advantage of being already poſſeſſed of

what is called, and frequently with too much juſtice, miniſterial deſpotiſm; hated to ſuch a degree as to provoke, at this early period, a kind of inſurrection, of which he was the ſole object; this ſame Monſ. de Marbois has a ſeat at preſent in the Council of Five Hundred, that is to ſay, in the midſt of the aſſaſſins of a citizen king, if there ever exiſted one who deſerved that title; and in whoſe name he governed in a moſt deſpotic manner, while his brotner-in law, Kellerman, commanded the armies of the Republic. Citizen Barbe muſt ſurely be endowed with a very extraordinary degree of patriotiſm, ſince he finds no repugnance in ſitting amongſt the murderers of a prince who was certainly his benefactor in naming him to a ſituation which gave him fortune, power, and conſequence; and whom, on that account, if on no other, he certainly muſt allow to be a juſt and wiſe appreciator of merit.

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the general eſteem, joins a firmneſs of character which would inevitably have made him maſter of the public opinion.

If France wiſhes then to prevent the calamities with which Saint Domingo is menaced, let her haſten to re-eſtabliſh the unity of power and of will on which its ſalvation depends, by reſtoring Monſ. Du Chillau to the prayers of the colony. In the preſent circumſtances, wherever the wrong may be, the right is evidently with him who can ſave the country.—With reſpect to myſelf, who am apprehenſive that the contrary opinion will prevail, I am preparing to quit, at leaſt for a time, a country whoſe inhabitants already divided in their ſentiments, and deprived of the tutelary authority, around which they might have rallied, are on the point of becoming alternately the authors and the victims of an anarchy, which threatens them with univerſal, and inevitable deſtruction.

Already an aſſaſſination, rendered more atrocious by the regularity with which it was conducted *, has given the colony a ſpecimen of that ſanguinary enthuſiaſm which marked the firſt ſteps of the French Revolution.——Have you conceived then,

* M. Ferrand de Baudières, ſeneſchal of Petit-Goave, tried, condemned, and executed by an aſſembly as tumultuous as it was illegal.

Gentlemen,

Gentlemen, the horrible deſign of verifying by your own experience, whether it be not poſſible to attain by crimes, what has hitherto been looked upon as ſolely to be acquired by virtues? I will venture to predict to you, that it is not; and that the Phantom, adorned with the attributes, and covered with the maſk of Equality, which with a poignard in its hand, ſhews you the Temple of Liberty beyond that river of blood, through which it incites you to wade, is nothing but DESPOTISM IN DISGUISE.

I hope, and would fain believe, Sir, that efficacious meaſures are already taking for repreſſing the exceſs of this firſt movement of effervescence. It is not, certainly, by attacking in their principle, the laws of juſtice and humanity, the baſis of every ſocial contract, that you can expect to ſucceed in fixing the rights of the man, and the citizen. "Our "nation," ſaid Voltaire, "is frivolous, but cruel." Strive to convict the Lord of Ferney of a double falſehood, by proving to Europe, which has her eyes attentively fixed upon you, that the French nation, *frivolous* while ſhe was not permitted to be any thing elſe, and *cruel* while the ambition of her chiefs precipitated her into all the exceſſes of civil diſcord, can diſplay a very different character when

* *Oeuvres Complettes.* Tome 60. Lettre 119.

there

there is no longer a queſtion of deciding between the choice of factions, but of calmly deliberating on the laws from which her future happineſs and liberty are to be derived. Now, now is the moment to call to recollection that exquiſite thought of the profound Monteſquieu, " In the times of " ignorance legiſlators commit the greateſt evils " without ſcruple; but in an enlightened age they " even tremble while conferring the greateſt bleſ- " ſings." *

Enough, Sir, and more than enough, for a man who ſpeaks, at ſuch a diſtance, to people who do not appear over and above attentive to the voice of reaſon: and it is this conſideration, I frankly confeſs, which has more than any other, determined me to retire to North America. Believe me,—tranquilly ſeated on the ſhore, to which you are endeavouring to ſteer the veſſel, whoſe management embarraſſes as much as it fatigues you, and where you hope to find a ſafe retreat from the ſtorm that is blackening around you; I ſee diſtinctly all the perils, the rocks and quickſands, which threaten your approach, and which do not ſeem to have attracted your notice.

If nothing happens to prevent me, I ſhall ſet out towards the end of the enſuing month, or, at lateſt,

* *De L'Eſprit des Lois.* Tome 1. Preface.

in the beginning of Auguſt. And where could I find a ſpot better adapted to obſerve, and to judge of your Revolution, than the country, which, after having ſo prudently effected its own, and afforded you, in ſome reſpects, a proper model to follow, has been the ſchool of ſeveral men, whoſe names I ſee with unaffected pleaſure in the liſt of your legiſlators; becauſe I hope the experience of things will ſupply, with regard to them, that of age and reflection—if, after all, ſuch a thing be poſſible.

The little time I have to remain here will render my future obſervations more fugitive and deſultory than uſual. We do not dwell with much intereſt on what we are about to quit for ever. I confeſs that my letters are little more, properly ſpeaking, than notes on Saint Domingo; but, I muſt be allowed to ſay, at the ſame time, that this was all I promiſed.

Let us throw, then, a paſſing glance on the phyſical, which, with a more ſyſtematic obſerver, would have preceded the moral, education.

There is much more good to be ſaid of the one than the other. As the women are brought to bed here with infinitely more facility than elſewhere, the children have, even in this, no inconſiderable advantage; ſince they are not liable to be injured by

by difficult labours, nor by the unſkilfulneſs of the midwife.

From the mother they paſs immediately into the arms of the nurſe, who places them on a large mat in the middle of the room. There, naked from head to foot, and bathed twice a day in cold, or at moſt, lukewarm water, a ſimple clout to dry them, compoſes the whole ſtock of their ſwaddling-clothes—ſo juſtly proſcribed by Buffon * and Rouſſeau. †

It was in this equipage that I found the little Paulina at my arrival. She was then only two months old, and had already begun to creep about upon her mat. At four months ſhe could ſtand upright; at ſix ſhe ran, fell, and got up again, without any one's being alarmed at her falls, or attempting to aſſiſt her. The only inconvenience attending this natural mode of education is the difficulty of habituating children to clothe themſelves. Much time was required to accuſtom Paulina to wear ſhoes. Her firſt employ when ſhe wakes in a morning, is to take off the chemiſe which was put on her in the evening; as one of her greateſt pleaſures is to run about naked in the rain: and

* *Hiſtoire Naturelle.* Tome 4.

† *Emile, ou de L'Education.* Tome 1.

this is a pleaſure in which ſhe is conſtantly indulged; for experience has ſhewn that theſe kind of baths are extremely ſalutary. Thus Paulina is as ſtrong and as well formed, at two years old, as the beſt conſtitutioned children with you are at five; without ever having experienced, even at the critical period of dentition, any of thoſe evils which torment our infancy in Europe. She will aſtoniſh me in no trifling degree, if I ſhould ever ſee her, delicate and vapouriſh, teaze, and put to the proof, even the tenderneſs of her lover, by the capricious ſenſibility of her nerves.

Let us not, however, Sir, conclude from what has been ſaid, that this kind of phyſical education is proper for all countries. Some regard muſt be paid to the climate, and to the variations of temperature, which mark in a degree more or leſs ſenſible, the difference of the ſeaſons; as well as to the habitudes, regimen, cuſtoms, and wants which await the children in the life to which they are deſtined. Thus there would be as much imprudence in not cloathing them at all in Europe, as there is in cloathing them too much; in bathing them without diſtinction in all ſeaſons, as in never bathing them at all, &c.

There exiſts an abuſe, however, at Saint Domingo, which the negro women have introduced, and the

the Creoles too generally adopted: inſtead of carrying the children as we do, they carry them aſtride on their haunches *. This is certainly much more convenient for the mother or the nurſe, who preſerving by this means the free uſe of one of her arms, may walk, nay run without being incommoded by her burden: but ſtill the advantages of this method are balanced by the inconvenience of ſwelling the bellies, and deforming the thighs of the children—I can attribute to nothing but this, the bending of the tibia, and the want of proportion obſervable in the ſlim legs of the greater part of the negroes.

It muſt appear ſomewhat extraordinary to you that children are not baptized here at their birth. The ceremony is ſometimes deferred for ten years; and the clergy make no oppoſition to this ſort of anabaptiſm. This delay, however, muſt not be looked upon in an heretical point of view; being at bottom little more than an affair of calculation. The buſineſs is to find a god-father, rich, and unmarried, who, while he renounces in the name of his adopted god-ſon, "*the devil and all his works*; "*the pomps and vanities of this wicked world*," may leave him his eſtate, and make a handſome preſent

* This cuſtom is univerſal in Africa: it prevails alſo at the Moluccas. *Hiſtoire Generale des Voyages*. Tome 4. Chap. 8.

to Monſieur the Rector, who thus loſes nothing by waiting.

If we put off here, Sir, to the epoch when innocence begins to bluſh at its nakedneſs, the precaution of giving a veil to the modeſty of the daughters; that of the mothers has merely what is neceſſary to conceal the nudity, without hiding the ſhape, of their limbs. A ſingle petticoat and a looſe gown of the fineſt muſlin compoſe their uſual dreſs —there is no occaſion for a long and narrow examination to diſtinguiſh acroſs the faint carnation tinge which floats along this airy veſture, the impoſtures of art from the real treaſures of nature! When circumſtances require them to be dreſſed with more care, they add a coloured under-petticoat, and a corſet: if there be any who have the folly of attempting to ſet themſelves out with more parade, ſo much the worſe for them—they are certainly not the moſt handſome; and the art which deprives beauty of ſome of its charms, can never embelliſh uglineſs. With reſpect to the face, that muſt be left at all events as it came out of the hands of nature; for however ſkilfully the paint may be applied, we ſhould ſee in a few minutes the charms of the prettieſt made-up face melt away with the ceruſe, and the carmine that compoſed it.

A female

A female Creole, who has never been out of Saint Domingo, would be a creature of a particular ſpecies, were it not for the conformity which an education, ſimilar in almoſt every inſtance, eſtabliſhes between her and the female mulatto. Let this, however, be a ſecret between us: for you will eaſily comprehend that with the prejudices which exiſt here, ſuch a compariſon muſt be an inexpiable crime in the eyes of thoſe whoſe dignity it compromiſes.

I have no intention to ſpeak of their morals, yet I cannot help obſerving that the female Creoles have ſo much the more merit in living chaſte, as the example of the males, and the education they receive, leave them abſolutely without reſource againſt the influence of the climate, and the dangers of an eternal idleneſs. They paſs their lives either ſtretched at length, or *chinta*, that is, ſitting in the oriental manner on mats, where their ſupreme delight is to have the ſoles of their feet tickled by a female ſlave. With the exception of a little cookery, they never employ themſelves in the occupations of their ſex: for in all parts of the world, where labour is the lot of the ſlave, idleneſs is neceſſarily an eſſential prerogative of the maſter. The only art in which they excel, the only one in which, I am told, their diligence equals their knowledge, is the art which conſtitutes not the leaſt indifferent

different part of the *Ars Amandi* of Ovid or of Bernard.

I ſhould have no great difficulty, Sir, to prove to you that idleneſs, and above all, a ſedentary life, contribute, in an extraordinary degree, to ſtrengthen the voluptuous paſſions, which depend leſs on climate than is generally ſuppoſed; if the diſcuſſion did not threaten to lead me into details, which might approach a little too near to the experimental philoſophy of Doctor Pangloſs. I ſhall content myſelf, then, with one remark; and to ſecure myſelf from all reproach, give it in the words of a grave and ſcientific traveller.

" The obſervations which I have made in " Ruſſia," ſays the Abbé Chappe d'Auteroche, " are in direct oppoſition to the opinion that the " conſtitution is leſs active in the northern than " the ſouthern climates. The Ruſſians muſt be " excepted from the general law; and I think I " can find in moral cauſes the ſolution of this ap- " parent contradiction. The women being aban- " doned to themſelves, and to indolence, the moſt " trifling paſſions are naturally productive of " ſtriking effects." *—But is there not a ſingular want of juſtice, Sir, in attributing, in almoſt every

* *Voyage en Sibérie.* Tome 2.

obſervation

obſervation of this nature, to the women alone the defective morals of ſuch or ſuch country? As if the aggreſſor, in every kind of combat, ought not to be conſidered as the firſt author of the defeat of the vanquiſhed!

One remark which I am ſorry to be under the neceſſity of making, is, that the ſlaves are much more harſhly treated by the women than the men. This diſguſting contraſt of cruelty with weakneſs, is a freſh proof that the latter has always been the eſſential characteriſtic of deſpotiſm; as the abuſe of power will always be the neceſſary conſequence of its uſurpation. The trembling hand of impotence graſps with increaſing violence the ſceptre, which it is in momentary danger of loſing.

LET-

LETTER XXXII.

Deſert,
June 1790.

I HAVE not forgot, Sir, that in the converſations which immediately preceded my departure for Saint Domingo, you frequently conjured me to be upon my guard againſt an error, common to the greater part of my brethren, and not to confound the happineſs of the inhabitants with the riches of a country —And, in effect, what is richer than Potoſi? who more miſerable than thoſe who inhabit it? I do not believe the obſervation was thrown out at random by the traveller who took notice, that "thoſe who "ſhewed the gold mines to Monſieur de la Conda-"mine were without ſhoes or ſtockings." *

The erroneous ſentiment which meaſures the happineſs of a ſtate by its power, is connected with the opinion, no leſs falſe, which judges of its ſtrength by its extent. Let us be well perſuaded that it is with ſocieties as with individuals; and that the greater part of the evils which afflict, and

* *Voyage en Italie par L'Abbé Coyer.*

of

of the vices which corrupt them, ſpring from the ſame ſource as their opulence and their power: we may then conclude that the juſt medium between poverty and riches is, for the happineſs of ſocieties, what moderate deſires are for that of individuals.

If the felicity of the coloniſts of Saint Domingo depended on the contingent which they pour into the balance of the riches of the ſtate, they would be, without contradiction, the moſt enviable of human beings: but as nothing exempts them from the general law which proportions their privations to their enjoyments; and as the evils which they ſuffer are the neceſſary conſequences of their means of proſperity, it inevitably follows that their happineſs muſt be always in inverſe ratio to their wealth.

It is not that the coloniſts do not enjoy many advantages unknown to the people of Europe. The equality which neceſſarily prevails in a country where the fullneſs of honour conſiſts in becoming a planter, eſtabliſhes a ſort of independence, inadmiſſible in every country where ambition and vanity open a career to the paſſions which ſpring from pride, alternately humbled and triumphant! Free from a part of the fetters which make the exerciſe of what is called good-breeding a very painful employment, the coloniſt who is content to ſtay at home,

home, enjoys there a degree of liberty and of power which ſovereigns themſelves might envy; ſince he is not, like them, ſubjected to the influence of opinion. If he ruins himſelf, it moſt aſſuredly is not for having ſacrificed to the laws of appearances, which no one obliges him to maintain—and nothing but an exceſs of vanity, or of folly, can poſſibly induce him to ſwell his expences beyond his means; ſince his neighbours are as well acquainted with his affairs as himſelf.

After all, however moderate his fortune may be, the climate is ſtill favourable to it by producing a two-fold ſaving—in reducing to a mere trifle the expence of cloathing, and to nothing at all, that, which of all the various articles of the firſt neceſſity is the moſt cruelly felt by the poor, I mean firing.

And even ſuppoſing, Sir, what very rarely happens, that the profits of a plantation do not enable a planter to purchaſe the three articles of animal life which are here the moſt expenſive, ſalt-meat, bread, and wine; he may ſupply the want of the firſt by poultry, which coſts him nothing to keep; of the ſecond by bananas, and of the third by taffiat *, a liquor diſtilled from molaſſes, which drank

* An inferior ſort of rum.

pure,

pure, but with moderation, or tempered with water, is no unwholeſome beverage.

But by how many inconveniences are not theſe advantages balanced! What an infinity of privations in that ſingle one of all ſociety! What repugnances to ſubdue, what diſguſts to overcome, for him who cannot, without putting his fortune to the hazard, diſpenſe with being at one and the ſame time, (though ſick and weak himſelf) the overſeer, driver, apothecary and nurſe of his negroes; in a word, the ſlave of his ſlaves! How many planters are there, who have loſt in a few hours the fruits of a long ſeries of laborious ſolicitudes! I have juſt ſeen one of theſe unfortunate men—After having ſacrificed twenty of the beſt years of his life in eſtabliſhing a coffee plantation, which was managed by forty negroes, he ſaw himſelf on the point of realizing, by the profits of his crop, and the ſale of his ſlaves, a capital of two hundred thouſand livres, with which he propoſed returning to his native country; when on the eve of the very day he had fixed for gathering in the berries, his black driver poiſoned ſeven and thirty of the negroes, and thus reduced him to the ſad neceſſity of beginning the world again—for not only the berries, but the plants themſelves, will become the immediate prey of the liane; which unleſs kept perpetually under by the hoe, over-runs and ſuffocates them.

Every

Every thing, Sir, every thing—the future itſelf, contributes here to embitter the preſent. The inhabitants execrate even the monotonous beauty of the ſky, of which the conſtant ſerenity appears, perhaps, to you, a benefit, but which is in reality little more than a laſting ſource of ennui. Nothing ever proved to me ſo completely, that nine-tenths of our poets were a ſet of ignorant and inſipid drivellers, than the enthuſiaſm with which theſe blockheads celebrate the charms of their " eternal " ſpring." Tell them from me, Sir, that ennui begins where hope ends; and that the ſpring owes half its beauties to the rigour of winter. Tell them that as the very feebleneſs which ſuſpends the uſe of one part of our powers, adds to the ſentiment of our exiſtence, ſo the ſweeteſt of our pleaſures are thoſe which are bought by privations and pains. Tell them that I have no difficulty in conceiving how the Jews, ſatiated with celeſtial manna, might ſometimes regret the fleſh-pots of Egypt: and, finally, put them in mind that eternity and its delights are only calculated for immortality.

Aſſuredly there is no where to be found a ſoil ſo fertile in inſects as that of Saint Domingo. You would ſay that every ſun-beam, every drop of rain, produced them by thouſands. 'Tis a peſt againſt which there is no preſervative. Every traveller is full of the ravages of thoſe innumerable bodies of ants,

ants, which, not content with laying waſte the gardens, enter the caſas in ſuch multitudes, that the inhabitants have been obliged to conſtruct drawers with legs to them, where they ſecure their proviſions, by placing them in little troughs filled with water. Nothing is ſafe from their active voracity; my ink itſelf becomes their prey, if I forget for an inſtant to ſhut my writing-deſk. I have ſeen them attack, ſubdue, and devour the moſt venomous inſects, ſuch as the red-tailed ſpider, the ſcorpion, the mille-pedes, &c. *

There is frequently found in the houſes a lizard of a light green, ſtreaked with roſe-coloured rings, which has procured it the pleaſing name of *Lizard-anoli*. This beautiful little animal is become very familiar, from the kindneſs with which it is treated, and which it does not owe to its beauty alone—ſince it is really a uſeful gueſt, being a great deſtroyer of inſects.

* At the Iſle de France, they have naturaliſed a bird named the *Martin*, a native of the Indies, which frees the cattle from the vermin that torment them. Why ſhould not the inhabitants of Saint Domingo equally endeavour to naturalize amongſt them, the natural enemies of the ant, ſuch as the *formicaleo*, which, multiplied to a certain degree, might ſucceed, if not in exterminating, yet certainly in diminiſhing the ſpecies conſiderably, in the vicinity of the ſettlements.

One

One of the daughters of Minyas has alſo arrived here to eſtabliſh the villainous brood of bats. I would fain believe that Jupiter has ſent us the uglieſt and moſt impious of the family. The ſpecies, as far as I have been able to judge, does not differ from our own.

It is not ſo with the ſhining fly, which they call here *coucouie*, from the Spaniſh *cucuios*, or *cuyeros*: it belongs to the ſpecies of *ſcarabæus*, and is diſtinguiſhed from ours not only by its ſize, which is nearly that of the May-bug, but by the light which it emits from its eyes. I have verified the obſervation that it is poſſible to read by the luſtre they ſhed around them when placed, in any number, under a glaſs.

Of all the beaſts, brute and human, which have been tranſported to the colonies, none have ſucceeded better than the aſſes. Always domeſtic, deſpiſed, and ſober, if their tranſplantation has added nothing to their intellectual faculties, it has certainly taken nothing from their phyſical ones. I know only the aſs and man who enjoy the privilege of living, without degenerating, under every latitude. The only difference I can perceive is, that the aſſes of this country, improved probably in modeſty, do not bray ſo frequently as thoſe of yours.

Amongſt

Amongſt the productions of the animal kingdom, that which we may be now and then allowed to be a little offended with nature for producing, is the inſect called here *Chique*, at Peru, *Pique*, and at Mexico, the Iſthmus of Panama, and Brazil, *Nigua*. It is the ſame, I believe, which in Virginia and the Carolinas is known by the name of the ſeed-tick *. This creature makes a more direct attack on man than the ant, which aims only at his ſubſiſtence, or the worm, which is content with his carcaſe: it devours him alive.

Imperceptible every where but in the ſkin where it lodges, the chique eats through the leather, or the ſeams of your ſhoes, to eſtabliſh itſelf in its favourite poſition under the toe-nail. Here it announces itſelf by a moſt violent itching; and if it be not immediately extirpated, or if, in your haſte, you break the pellicle which forms the ſack that contains its eggs, you muſt not hope to get rid of it without ſeeing the foot reduced to a ſtate of ſuppuration.

The longer the chique, which is only diſtinguiſhable as a little black ſpeck, remains in the fleſh, the deeper it penetrates. It multiplies there

* See *Le Journal d'un Voyage dans l'Interieure de L'Amérique Septentrionale.* Tome 2. Lettre 65.

ſo rapidly, that if it were left undiſturbed, the progeny of this little black ſpeck alone, would devour, in a given time, the ſtrongeſt man on earth. Father Labat relates that a Capuchin, being deſirous of conveying a chique to the European naturaliſts, had the reſolution to preſerve it till the moment that it became abſolutely neceſſary to cut off his leg, to ſtop the progreſs of a mortification *. You will agree with me, Sir, that this was devoting himſelf with a vengeance to the cauſe of Natural Hiſtory! In vain do you hope to preſerve yourſelf from their attacks, by keeping your caſa perfectly neat and clean; for if you have no chiques at home, you bring them from other people, or other people bring them to you. The only precaution you can take is to have your fleſh pinked, or ſlaſhed, the inſtant the itching begins to be troubleſome, or even before, if you have leiſure. The negro women, who are uſually employed on theſe occaſions, acquit themſelves very adroitly, with no other inſtrument than the point of a needle.

* *Nouveau Voyage aux Iſles Françoiſes de L'Amérique.* Tome 1. Chap. 6.

LET-

LETTER XXXIII.

Deſert, July 1790.

YES, Sir, man is, was, and always will be an enigma, as difficult to be ſolved by himſelf as by others. It is hardly a month ſince, that nothing but the hope of quitting this country could have rendered it ſupportable to me; and now, that this hope is changed into certainty, I know not what involuntary gloom oppreſſes my mind at the thought that I am on the eve of leaving for ever a ſpot, which I wiſh I had never ſeen, which I have execrated a thouſand times, and to which I would not willingly ſend even an enemy—But do not, rich and unhappy country! uſurp a tribute of ſenſibility which is not due to thee. It is not thou, it is you, ye toils, which relieved me ſo often from the weight of ennui; and thou, earth, whoſe aridity I chaſed away; it is you, ye days of uniformity and peace; ye hours of ſolitude and melancholy muſing, which I regret! Alas! thoſe trees which my hand has planted, which my care has foſtered, and of which my eye has anxiouſly watched the increaſe; thoſe paths traced with ſo much pain; thoſe rivulets, thoſe flowers, that ver-

dure—all, all will diſappear. As a torrent ſwelled with ſudden rains ſweeps away every trace of the culture which ſo lately embelliſhed its banks, ſo will a few ſhort months obliterate every veſtige of the innocent art which controuled nature, without violating, which adorned without diſguiſing her!

My departure for the United States of America is fixed for the enſuing month. La Condamine ſays he recovered amongſt ſavages from the fatigues of living with men; and I am going to recover amongſt men from the fatigues of living with ſlaves.

If I may truſt the reports of travellers, my removal to Penſylvania will give me a foretaſte of what he experiences who paſſes from the flames of purgatory to the joys of Paradiſe. The nearer the moment approaches, the more anxious I feel to ſee at length a country which they have termed the *chef-lieu of humanity* *. I accept the omen—but two year's reſidence in the pretended land of promiſe which I am about to quit, has ſo much weakened my confidence in the reports of theſe gentlemen, that with reſpect to unknown countries, I ſhall truſt to nothing in future but my own experience. I have always blamed the want of faith in

* *Hiſtoire de l'Aſie, de L'Afrique, et de L'Amérique.* Tome 13.

the

the diſciple who inſiſted on touching, before he would believe in the Maſter who had never deceived him. I, who have been deceived ſo often, am not ſo hard of belief; I only aſk to ſee—till then, I reduce, before hand, to their juſt value, that is, to ſomething leſs than one half, the marvels we have been told of this extraordinary country. Beſides, Sir, "novelty," as the author of the *Théorie des Sentimens agréables* * well obſerves, "has "no longer the ſame charms for the old; they "have learned to diſtruſt its promiſes;" and if I am not old in years, I am at leaſt in experience.

If you have ever known the conflict of two ſuch oppoſite paſſions as grief and joy, both flowing from the ſame ſource, you will comprehend the preſent ſtate of my mind: yes, Sir, my happineſs diſtreſſes me exceedingly, when I reflect that it may diſtreſs thoſe who cannot poſſibly partake it! One muſt be on the eve of breaking the tender ties of habitude to feel all its power. Do not, however, confound with the pretenſions of ſelf-love, the avowal of an attachment increaſed by every thing which a perfect uniformity of exiſtence can add to a no leſs perfect uniformity of ſentiments. Let the coxcomb who prides himſelf on the privations with which his retreat menaces ſociety, be-

* Chapter 4.

come,

come, and juſtly, the object of deriſion; but let not me, on that account, be prohibited from finding in the grief of thoſe, from whom fortune is about to tear me, a counterpoiſe to the ſentiment of my happineſs. Since my departure has been irrevocably determined, every day brings up the queſtion ſo often debated—Who is the moſt to be pitied, he who retires, or he who ſtays? The deciſion of this melancholy controverſy is always the ſame—namely, that, if the one carries with him thoſe indelible regrets and remembrances, which, wherever he goes, compel him to look upon himſelf as a ſtranger, a forlorn and inſulated being; while the other ſees in every object around him, a monument, that while it wakens his recollection, ſerves only to embitter his loſs; death, which precipitates into the ſame tomb two friends, levelled by the ſame blow, is infinitely preferable to ſuch a ſeparation.

It is at preſent with me, Sir, as with him, who, on the point of dying, regrets he has not made a better uſe of life. I reproach myſelf for my negligence in not entering into a variety of details, which might have ſerved to give you a more complete knowledge of the colony.

Although the judgment which one forms of a country, from a reſidence in the great towns, and from the manners of thoſe who inhabit them, is

almoſt

almoſt always erroneous; it was nevertheleſs a part of my plan to terminate with Cape François, and the diſtricts in its neighbourhood, my obſervations on Saint Domingo: but the proximity of Port-au-Prince, and the certainty of finding there a veſſel which would ſail in the beginning of Auguſt, joined to the difficulty of travelling, increaſed by the unfavourable circumſtance of a revolution ready to burſt forth, have decided otherwiſe; and I ſhall ſet out without having ſeen the fineſt city, and the moſt beautiful part of the iſland. It will be no very great misfortune if I may venture to judge of the unknown by the known.

Cape François is built of ſtone; becauſe its territory is the only one that has hitherto been free from earthquakes. I have been told that there is juſt as much difference between the ſtyle and manners of this town, and the others, as there is in their architecture; that is to ſay, the mental qualities of the former are to thoſe of the latter, what a houſe is to a paltry hut. I can believe that local or accidental cauſes may produce ſome ſenſible difference in the cuſtoms, or in the ſtyle of ſociety, without effecting on that account, any eſſential change in the manners, or in the maſs of ideas, of which the character is always imperiouſly decided by the ſubſiſting order of things. Thus, however old that order may be, I have not the leaſt doubt

but

but talents and virtues may be found here, juſt as candour and modeſty may at the court of a good prince, without courts being, for thoſe exceptions, leſs generally or leſs juſtly reputed the abodes of duplicity, and pride.

If the kind of life which the coloniſts lead preſerves them from the little ſhuffling, intriguing paſſions, the vain and paltry ſquabbles of our European coteries, this advantage is more than balanced by the total privation of that kind of wit which conſtitutes urbanity, wherever the ambition of ſucceeding neceſſitates an attempt to pleaſe. Every man who can acquire a fortune without the aſſiſtance of his neighbour, inevitably loſes a part of his ſocial qualities; and ſuch is at this moment, the inhabitant of the colonies. Leſs inſulated by the woods which ſurround him, than by his intereſt, his firſt ambition is to acquire a fortune, his ſecond to acquire it in the ſpeedieſt manner; that he may be enabled to quit as ſoon as poſſible, a country where gold but very imperfectly gratifies the demands of vanity; and where avarice makes but few ſacrifices to ſelf-love.

It is, then, extremely natural that men, always ready to return, ſhould receive with little anxiety ſuch as arrive, and that they ſhould feel ſtill leſs anxious to eſtabliſh, even amongſt themſelves, any connection

connection more intimate than that which exiſts among travellers who are ſpeedily to ſeparate for ever. It is true, that ſucceſs rarely juſtifies the hopes which the mind forms with ſo much the more avidity, as nothing diverts it from that ſole object of its attention. But what of that! Experience can do nothing againſt an opinion once received. It is ſo well eſtabliſhed, in the mother country eſpecially, that nothing more is neceſſary to become a Crœſus than to breathe the air of the colonies; that without embarraſſing themſelves with the fates of thoſe who die in miſery, it is ſufficient for them to ſee from time to time, ſome one return, who, particularly favoured by circumſtances, has acquired a fortune; to give this prejudice all the conſiſtency of a mathematical demonſtration.—A *Weſt Indian* and a *Millionaire* will be long ſynonymous in France.

Ready to renounce, after an experience of two years, expectations which every hour proves to be more and more illuſory, I am determined not to add to the number of impoſtors, who with a pernicious levity, or a moſt culpable diſingenuity, take advantage of the credulity of ignorance to propagate an error which has already ruined thouſands. Know then, Sir, once for all, that the time of rapid fortunes is to the hiſtory of Saint Domingo, what the ages when ſimple knights conquered kingdoms,

kingdoms, are to the annals of France *: that if the ſoil of the colonies, like mines newly diſcovered, enriched the firſt who cultivated it, that ſoil, after attaining the maximum of its value, loſes every day ſomething of its fertility †: and that the proportion between its produce, and the expence of cultivating it, becoming, as I have proved, momentarily more diſadvantageous to the cultivator, the epoch cannot be far diſtant, when he will ſee the fruits of his labour ſcarcely ſuffice for his ſubſiſtence. Calculate, now, the privations of every kind, the commercial viciſſitudes, the perpetual apprehenſions, the diſguſting details, inſeparable from the nature of ſlavery; the ſtate of languor or anxiety in which he vegetates between a burning ſky, and a ſoil always ready to ſwallow him up, and you will allow with me, that there is

* Such as Gui de Luſignan, king of Jeruſalem; Tancred de Tancarville king of Sicily; Jean de Brienne, emperor of the eaſt, &c.

† We muſt not compare the lands of the colonies with thoſe of Europe; the principle of vegetation in the latter being conſtantly renewed by manure, which the others never receive. Every kind of ſoil ſuffices for its natural productions, when theſe productions of themſelves ſupply vegetation with a part of what they abſorb; ſuch as the leaves of trees, moſſes, dead wood, the dung of animals, &c. but there is no ſoil, however fertile, which will not be exhauſted, eſpecially if it be compelled to bear what is foreign to it, without it be from time to time heartened with manure. That of Saint Domingo rarely reſiſts more than twenty, or five and twenty years of cultivation.

no peaſant, no day-labourer in Europe, whoſe condition is not preferable to that of a planter of Saint Domingo. La Fontaine ſomewhere ſays

" Aucun chemin de fleurs ne conduit à la gloire."

Preciſely the ſame thing, Sir, may be ſaid of riches.

Do not ſuffer yourſelf to be impoſed on by the puerile and ridiculous pomp which certain planters diſplay in their tranſient reſidence at Paris, or in the maritime towns. I am in the ſecret of theſe quacks. This coach in which his Weſt Indian Worſhip ſo awkwardly parades, that wardrobe of the Marquis de Maſcarille, theſe jewels which ſparkle on his tawny fingers, are the profits of many crops, and the price of no ſmall number of his ſlaves. Yet a little while, and hard neceſſity will ſend the clowniſh niggard back, half civilized, and wholly ſtript, like the daw in the fable, of his borrowed plumes, to begin again, with an aching heart, thoſe labours which ſcarce produced in ten years, as much as he has ſpent in ten months, with no other advantage than having raiſed a laugh at his expence, from the Chevaliers d'Induſtrie, who ſtripped him of his wealth, and the proſtitutes who ſhared with them in the ſpoils.

I never met a Weſt Indian in France who did not enumerate to me, with more emphaſis than accuracy,

racy, the charms of a reſidence at Saint Domingo: ſince I have been here, I have not found a ſingle one who has not curſed both Saint Domingo, and the obſtacles, eternally reviving, which, from one year to another, prolong his ſtay in this abode of the damned.

LETTER XXXIV.

Deſert,
July 1790.

I HAVE perceived, Sir, what in fact you muſt have perceived yourſelf, that in my obſervations on this country, I have omitted a very material circumſtance.

You know the kind of life led by the coloniſts, their modes of cultivation, their means of acquiring a fortune, &c. but you have hitherto found little or nothing in my letters to enable you to form an idea of the way in which New Eſtabliſhments are ſet on foot. In the natural order of things, this ſhould have preceded every other ſpecies of information:

ation: but my anxiety to give you none but juſt ideas on the ſubject induced me to defer it, until time and perſonal experience had made me intimately acquainted with all the details of this firſt, and moſt important operation.

In conſequence of the inevitable inequality with which the goods of this world are diſtributed, we muſt begin with ſuppoſing the new coloniſt placed between the two extremes of riches and poverty; that is, in a condition to enter upon the buſineſs with his own reſources.

His firſt diſburſement, which I eſtimate at four thouſand livres, will be the charges of the conceſſion, and the ſetting it out: and his firſt employ, to examine, in company with the ſurveyor, the ſituation, &c. of the ground—after being well aſſured that it was never conceded before (which has ſometimes been found to be the caſe) or if it was, that it has been legally reunited to the domain. He will then mark out the boundaries diſtinctly, and cauſe an exact plan to be made of it, that he may avoid all diſcuſſions with his neighbours.

It was formerly the cuſtom for theſe ſame neighbours to lend the new comer a few ſlaves, to aſſiſt in cutting down the trees which occupied the ſpot deſtined for the ſite of his dwelling houſe, and clearing

clearing a quantity of ground ſufficient for planting a few bananas, &c. for the immediate ſupport of his negroes: but I would not adviſe him to found any mighty hopes at preſent on this reſource. It was at firſt but a virtue of circumſtance.

If his means allow of it, the wiſeſt ſtep the young planter can take will be either to buy a few negroes, already accuſtomed to the breaking up of new ground, called here *hatchet negroes*, and who may ſerve to inſtruct the reſt; or to hire a vacant gang; that is, a ſet of ſlaves let out by their maſter, after he has diſpoſed of all his immoveable property, for a limited time. If he does not adopt one of theſe reſources, he muſt repair to the ſea-ports, and buy of the firſt ſlave-ſhip which puts in, the requiſite number of hands, which I ſhould fix at ten, and which, with the neceſſary expences of his journey, the purchaſe of working tools, and proviſions, the charges of carriage, &c. will ſtand him in near ten thouſand livres, ſuppoſing that he buys picked negroes, and pays according to the prevailing cuſtom, only a third in ready money.

Neceſſity ſometimes obliges the poorer planters to purchaſe, at a much lower price, what is called the fag-end of the cargo, or refuſe negroes: but of all the diſadvantageous bargains which a want of money

money ſometimes induces people to make, this is one of the moſt ruinous.

At all adventures, however, the new coloniſt cannot do better than apply his cares, in the firſt place, to lodge both himſelf and his negroes, to break up as ſoon as poſſible, the ground allotted for bananas, manioc, patates, ignamas, &c. provide a poultry yard, cattle of various kinds; and, until he can ſubſiſt on the produce of theſe different objects, furniſh himſelf with ſalt-meat, biſcuit, &c.—I do not believe all this can be done under four thouſand livres.

A ſpirit of order is leſs common than is uſually imagined; it is, however, extremely neceſſary to attend to it in beginning an eſtabliſhment. To ſay nothing of the loſs of time, therefore, occaſioned by ill-directed labours, I look on it as a precaution indiſpenſably neceſſary to place the dwelling-houſe as near the water as poſſible, in an airy ſituation, and in the centre of the conceſſion; from thence every operation ſhould diverge, that the works may extend along the circumference, as the means of cultivation increaſe; and, above all, that the time abſorbed by long routs may be œconomized.

I ought to obſerve, Sir, that the mode I have juſt recommended is not applicable to a ſugar plantation,

ation, which requires very different meaſures, and capitals much more conſiderable; and which cannot, in fact, be entered upon but by a rich man, deſirous to become ſtill more ſo.

Almoſt all new planters clear more ground than they can cultivate at firſt; this is attended with the two-fold inconvenience of depriving the ground of a part of the principles of its fecundity, and of waſting the time which might be much more profitably employed. I have more than once regretted that this country has not produced a ſingle planter ſufficiently informed to write a tract on agriculture; ſuch a work, if properly executed, would be an ineſtimable treaſure for the new coloniſt. If I have not a wrong idea of the duties which the public good impoſes upon government, I cannot avoid thinking it its peculiar province to command, and pay for, the writing of ſuch an elementary treatiſe.

It is generally ſuppoſed, and I believe with reaſon, that the cuſtom of ſetting fire to the wood which has been felled, is the beſt that could have been adopted; ſince the aſhes ſerve for manure to the chill and humid ſoil of theſe ancient foreſts. Happily, Sir, in this inſtance, the advantage of the planter, and invincible neceſſity accord—for by what other agent than fire could he poſſibly clear away

away thoſe immenſe falls? I only wiſh he would proceed to the operation with a little more forethought; for then, as I have already obſerved, he might ſelect a certain quantity of the more precious woods, and above all, not burn, as he does now, ſixty acres of foreſt, for the ſake of clearing ten acres of ground! There is ſcarce a man in eaſy circumſtances either in England or Holland, whoſe furniture is not made of mahogany; while in France it is a kind of curioſity, rarely to be ſeen but in the boudoirs of the pretty creatures of both ſexes. Hence it is but reaſonable to conclude that our induſtry ſtill bears the impreſſion of that puerile character which is much more engaged with the caprices of vanity, than the wants of the multitude; while it neglects an infinite number of reſources from which our commercial neighbours draw individual as well as general advantage.

Coffee is at preſent the commodity which the majority of the coloniſts principally attach themſelves to raiſe. Thoſe who do not ſet out with a capital ſufficient to enable them to wait three years, till the produce of a coffee-walk may enable them to extend their labours, and free themſelves from a part of the engagements they have contracted, will do well to join the cultivation of cotton to that of coffee; but let them carefully avoid the common error of indiſcriminately mixing two pro-

ductions, of which one requires a light and warm, the other a dry and fatty ſoil.

"The appetite," ſays an old proverb, comes with "eating;" from hence, I ſuppoſe it is, that the greateſt part of the coloniſts, inſtead of employing the price of their firſt crops to pay their ruinous debts, make uſe of it to purchaſe a greater number of negroes; that is, to contract new debts without previouſly calculating whether the benefits they expect to derive from the produce of a more extended cultivation will make up for the difference, always very conſiderable, between their credit, and their means of acquittal.

I have ſaid above "the greateſt part," for there may ſtill, perhaps, be found a few whom nature has endowed with a ſolidity of underſtanding never miſled by falſe calculations, and a degree of moderation which preſerves them from every unneceſſary expence. But what an inextricable labyrinth of embarraſſment and penury does not he involve himſelf in, who with more vanity than prudence, has ſcarcely advanced a ſtep in the road to fortune, ere, dazzled by the blaze of the riches he ſees in the diſtant view, and believing he may from that inſtant anticipate on the future, he haſtens to exhauſt his means of ſucceſs to purchaſe new ones, and in his preſent

preſent mediocrity, indulges himſelf in pleaſures which his future opulence would ſcarcely ſupport!

And if we reflect but a moment, Sir, on the kind of men which frequent the colonies, we ſhall ſee that it can hardly be otherwiſe. Poor, and conſequently unacquainted with the œconomy of a property which they have never poſſeſſed, greedy of pleaſures, in proportion as they have been ſenſible of their privation, and extremely acceſſible to pride, which poſſeſſes every ſpecies of *parvenu*, their firſt care will be always to enjoy, and their enjoyment, that of ſurrounding themſelves with every thing, which by flattering their deſpicable vanity, may contribute to diſſipate all memory of their former wretchedneſs. For do not imagine, Sir, that in the ſtruggle between avarice and ſelf-love, the victory always falls to the firſt. The more deeply they have felt their former nullity, the more haſte they will make to procure whatever gives them conſequence. What! do you imagine they have abandoned their country, encountered the tempeſts of the ocean, and braved the fires of the torrid zone to enter, in the new world, upon a new courſe of œconomy!

For the reſt, Sir, what I have ſaid in the preceding pages muſt be underſtood to be levelled merely at the *abuſe* of credit: ſince I cannot be ignorant

norant that the thing itſelf is equally advantageous to both the parties concerned, when it has for its object a uſeful enterprize, of which the profits finally promiſe to exceed the intereſt. I know well that credit is the ſoul of commerce, and that commerce is the vivifying principle of political ſocieties; I know, too, that the proportion between the profits, and the intereſt of the ſum borrowed, is not always diſregarded, ſince there are planters to be found who have made, and ſtill make prodigious fortunes—but beſides, that theſe fortunes have not always been acquired by commerce, and the credit attendant on it; the general deduction is not the leſs true, that examples of this ſort are much rarer than is uſually ſuppoſed; and that here as well as elſewhere, it is neceſſary, if you wiſh to attain a certain degree of proſperity, to join a great ſhare of good fortune to a great ſhare of good ſenſe.

What is at once pleaſant, and ridiculous, is the ſerious air with which the trader lays claim to the gratitude of the coloniſt on the ſcore of exacting no intereſt for the advances he is in the habit of making:—it is, in fact, the cuſtom to ſtipulate for none, in the tranſactions which take place between the merchant and the planter; but where is the novice ſo completely ignorant of affairs, as not to know that the ſecret of this pretended generoſity

conſiſts in comprehending the intereſt in the principal, and that the whole is little better than a miſerable ſubterfuge, behind which the lender endeavours to ſecure himſelf from the reproach of the moſt ſhameful uſury!

I have appropriated, Sir, the profits of the firſt crops to the payment of debts; for the obſervation is no leſs true here than in Europe, that he who pays his debts is growing rich. This ſtep, however, will not prevent the new coloniſt from withholding from thoſe profits, enough to enable him to live more commodiouſly than he could at firſt, to proceed to the conſtruction of drying-ſlopes, magazines, mills, caſas, &c. to furniſh his houſe, and to procure ſome domeſtic negroes—moſt expenſive articles for a man in his ſituation: ſince, if he takes them from out-lying ſlaves, (to ſay nothing of the difficulty of forming them to the ſervice of the houſe) the labour of a negro being eſtimated at twelve or fifteen hundred livres, each of them will repreſent a ſum of forty or fifty thouſand livres, to be withdrawn from the capital of his fortune: and if he buys them already formed, it is to be preſumed the ſeller will not forget to make him pay the charges of their education. I do not think it poſſible for him to procure the two laſt articles for leſs than five and thirty, or forty thouſand livres.

Undoubtedly,

Undoubtedly, when he is got thus far, he may look upon himſelf as eſtabliſhed, and indulge reaſonable hopes of the future: but, obſerve, Sir, to arrive at this point, that is, at his fourth year, it has coſt him near fifty thouſand livres, without reckoning the twenty thouſand which he ſtill owes for the purchaſe of his firſt ten negroes; and that, if by their means he has been enabled to clear and plant a hundred ſquares of ground, the labour of getting in the crops will from thenceforth exact a much greater number of hands, and conſequently call on him for new diſburſements, which cannot ſafely be eſtimated at leſs than 100,000 livres.

Of ten Europeans who ſettle at Saint Domingo, ſeven at leaſt will return home the moment they have acquired enough to live there in comfort. Thoſe whoſe characters, or whoſe taſtes are ſo repugnant to colonial manners as to induce them to break off all connection with the colonies, look out for a reſponſible purchaſer, to whom they diſpoſe of their property for a certain ſum, to be paid outright, or by inſtalments. You muſt not imagine, however, that the price of an eſtate is regulated by its annual income here as with you, and ſold accordingly—no, Sir—and I think I have already mentioned the reaſon of it. Others, anxious to retain a valuable property, confide the management of their affairs to an agent, who has either a fixed

ſalary,

ſalary, or a ſhare of the profits; and appoint a proctor to overlook him.

This is expoſing themſelves to a world of troubles; for if the agent be not the moſt honeſt of men, no overlooking will prevent his making his fortune at the expence of his principal. You may ſuppoſe, too, that the choice of a proctor is not without its difficulties; ſince, if you take him from the claſs of your equals, that is, from that of the planters, his own affairs will allow him to give but a ſuperficial attention to yours; and if you addreſs yourſelf to a man of the law, to a proctor by profeſſion—although there may be honeſt people every where—you know the inveterate prejudice againſt this deſcription of men; and in ſuch a caſe, it is not abſolutely impoſſible but that your intereſts might ſuffer a little from the collufion which may take place between him and the agent. I appeal on this head, to the experience of the greater part of the proprietors reſident in Europe. For myſelf, Sir, placed between the choice of meaſures, all of which have their inconveniences, I am inclined to think that the plan of giving the agent a ſhare in the produce of the eſtate which he adminiſters, would at leaſt have the advantage of attaching him, by his own intereſt, to the performance of his duty.

LET-

LETTER XXXV.

Port-au-Prince,
July 1790.

I HAVE been ſo happy, Sir, as to find on my arrival here, a veſſel which ſets ſail to-morrow, and which I ſhall charge with my laſt letters to you. I have no idea where I ſhall be when they reach you; moſt certainly not at Saint Domingo; for I embark in three days.

The deſire of examining accurately the ſpace between the two coaſts, the South and Weſt, having determined me to take a different, but much leſs practicable rout than the common one, I ſent my baggage before me, and ſet out on horſeback, attended by the ſame negro that accompanied me on a former journey.

I purpoſed to reach Leogane without ſtopping; and nothing would have prevented me, had not a violent ſtorm, which came on about noon, ſuddenly ſwelled the torrents I had to paſs to ſuch a degree, that I was obliged to waſte a good deal of time in ſearching, along their borders, for fords where I

ran

ran no riſk of being drowned, or ſwept away by the impetuoſity of the currents.

Night ſurpriſed me in the midſt of theſe deſerts, drenched with rain, and utterly incapacitated from continuing my journey till day break. Our horſes too, were ſo much exhauſted with hunger and fatigue, that I concluded to turn them into the firſt ſavanna we reached, and to paſs the night myſelf under the ſhelter of ſome tree.

This plan was far from being agreeable to my negro, who, at the approach of the ſtorm, and afterwards, on the cloſing in of the evening, had pointed out to me ſeveral habitations at a diſtance, where he would engage I ſhould be well received; but which I conſtantly refuſed to approach, in the fear that I ſhould only find there new reaſons to deplore the decay of hoſpitality at Saint Domingo —Do not you ſee, Sir, that this will afford an ample theme for the eloquence of my panegyriſt, who will hereafter ſay "ſuch was the favourable opi-"nion he entertained of his contemporaries, that "he would frequently carry his delicacy ſo far as "to take their virtues on truſt, rather than prove "them by his own experience!"

In groping about to the right and left to find a ſituation favourable to my deſigns, I was ſuddenly

ſtruck

ſtruck with a gleam of light, to which I inſtantly directed my ſteps. It proceeded from a little country houſe belonging to a proctor of Leogane; in which I found only a female negro, who took care of it, and who received me with a degree of hoſpitality I might have vainly looked for in the houſes of many whites.

As I had not even a change of linen with me, the abſolute neceſſity of drying every thing I had on, would have compelled me to paſs the reſt of the evening in the perfect ſtate of innocence of our firſt father, if the kind-hearted negreſs had not flown to the ſuccour of my modeſty with an old pair of pantouffles, and a waiſtcoat, which compoſed the whole rural wardrobe of the proprietor: to theſe ſhe added an under-petticoat of her own, to wrap round my middle.

It was in this Amazonian habiliment that I ſat down to ſupper before a good fire, while the houſekeeper got my bed ready—in which I ſhould have ſlept much leſs profoundly than I did, if I had ſuffered myſelf to be alarmed by the univerſal opinion, that rains are fatal to the traveller, when they pierce to the ſkin before he can reach a place of ſhelter. I can eaſily imagine that, as their natural effect is to check the perſpiration, they are ſometimes attended with dangerous conſequences; but

I am

I am equally perſuaded, that nothing more is neceſſary to render them perfectly innoxious, than to re-eſtabliſh that perſpiration as ſoon as poſſible; which in a climate like this, is a matter of no great difficulty.

I got up before day-break and proceeded on my journey: the morning was as fine as the evening before was diſagreeable. Two hours riding carried me acroſs the mountains; from thence a gentle deſcent led to the plain, which, terminated by the ſea, and enlivened by the riſing ſun, afforded from the ſpot where I ſtood, a moſt charming ſpectacle.

I found along the road a vaſt number of tourlouroux, or land crabs, who had ſtationed themſelves at the mouth of the hole which ſerved them for a retreat, and appeared to be enjoying the morning air: theſe animals immediately retire at the approach of travellers, making a kind of clicking noiſe with their claws, as if to warn the neighbourhood of the advance of an enemy. I have great doubts whether what I have heard be true, that they have been known to devour men alive; but I am perfectly ſure that they reſort in great numbers to the vicinity of burying grounds, for the ſake of feeding on the dead bodies: this, however, does not prevent the negroes from eating them.

Leſs

Leſs occupied now than at my firſt *ſortie* from the mountains, when the habitude of ſeeing nothing but rocks, precipices, and woods, made me run my eyes eagerly, and indiſcriminately over a landſcape altogether new to me; I had leiſure to contemplate a group of ſuperb palms, on the right of the road, intirely inſulated in a plain from five and thirty to forty miles in length, and from ten to twelve in breadth.

At the ſight of ſuch a beautiful colonade, it is no longer neceſſary to enquire where the ſculptors of antiquity found the model, and the proportions of thoſe which decorated the palaces of kings, and the temples of the Gods. I have never had the good fortune to ſee thoſe chef-d'œuvres, whoſe very ruins render the country which poſſeſſes them illuſtrious; thoſe ſcattered fragments

Où dans tout ſon orgueil gît le néant de l'homme;

but ſtruck with the character of grandeur and majeſty which nature impreſſes on her own monuments, I could not avoid exclaiming, Where is the Michael Angelo, or the Palladio who would undertake to build a temple to which this colonade ſhould ſerve for a periſtyle.*

I found

* It is ſo true that the arts, even the moſt complicated, borrow all their principles from nature, that the three architects who conſtructed, the one the temple of Balbec, the other that of Palmyra, the

I found at Port-au-Prince, the two things which I expected: a veſſel to take me to the United States, and minds exceſſively inflamed by the progreſs of the Revolution. I arrived at Saint Domingo in the Venus, I ſhall quit it in the Flora: theſe charming names ſeem to augur well—yet I found the iſland attacked by the firſt ſymptoms of the political fever which preys upon you, and I leave it in the firſt convulſions of a delirium. Neither the colonial aſſembly, nor the governor, Monſ. de Peyniers appears to me in the principles which the exigencies of the time require. The one wiſhes to give too great an extent to the power with which circumſtances have inveſted it; and the other, ill adviſed by a young man more violent and hot-headed than wiſe *, exhibits ſuch an incoherent mixture of obſtinacy and pliability, as muſt infal-

the third the colonade of the Louvre, perfectly correſpond in the number and order of this ſpecies of decoration; although neither of the three could have any knowledge of the work of the two others. See Volney's Voyage in Syria and Egypt. Vol. 2. Chap. 30.

* The Chevalier de Mauduit, Colonel of the regiment of Port-au-Prince, an officer full of zeal and courage, who ſerved with diſtinction in the army of Rochambeau in America, but much too raſh and inexperienced for the critical ſituation in which he ſtood. He was murdered ſometime afterwards by the very ſoldiers with whom he had broke up the Colonial Aſſembly, and in the boſom of that very aſſembly—where he was ſeeking an aſylum from the fury of his troops.

libly

libly tend to encourage the factious, and diſguſt the well-intentioned. I ſee but one way of ſaving the colony: it is to bring about the revolution by the hands of thoſe who are ineffectually employed in endeavouring to retard its progreſs. They can no longer check; they may ſtill direct it. *

The bulk of the coloniſts, the merchants, the different departments of adminiſtration, have all an equal intereſt to maintain order: let them ſpeedily join themſelves to the governor, to baffle and counteract the dark intrigues carrying on by the diſaffected to excite an inſurrection of the people of colour, and the negroes. Theſe culpable perturbators are perfectly well known to be the ſecret emiſſaries of the ſect called, or calling itſelf, the FRIENDS OF THE BLACKS. What would theſe people have?—Suppoſe they ſhould ſucceed in eſtabliſhing their principles, what advantage do they expect to derive from their victory? Is it the abolition of ſlavery? But this would bring on the ruin of the colonies: and in what way can this ruin,

* It was preciſely ſo in the mother country, where the Court fell into the ſame error as the adminiſtrators of Saint Domingo. Nothing would have been, originally, more eaſy than to *direct* the Revolution: but they no ſooner ſaw the torrent ready to burſt forth than, blindly attached to the old and trivial ſyſtem of court hydraulics, inſtead of digging for it a broad and deep channel, they attempted to confine it by a dyke, and—all was ſwept away!

which

which would inevitably draw after it that of the commerce of France, poſſibly intereſt either the happineſs, or the liberty of the inhabitants of Paris? Or is it the hope of putting a ſtop to the conſumption of colonial produce, with the ſlavery which produces it? But they muſt know little of the power of habit, become a kind of ſecond nature, who can fool themſelves with ſuch a chimera. What name, then, ſhall we give to this abſurd policy, this frantic *civiſm*, this barbarous humanity, which for the ſake of withdrawing ſome Africans from a ſtate of ſlavery daily becoming more tolerable, (to ſay nothing of the torrents of blood it muſt occaſion) would condemn France to loſe the immenſe maſs of ſpecie with which it would be thenceforth neceſſary to purchaſe from foreigners, what they had hitherto bought of us! And do they reckon for nothing, then, the three hundred million livres which the colonies pour annually into the ports of the mother country, where they give bread to more than five millions of people!

I ſee with pain, Sir, that the revolutionary vertigo has already made ſuch progreſs amongſt the inhabitants, that even at table, ſurrounded by mulattoes and negroes, they indulge themſelves in the moſt imprudent diſcuſſions on liberty, &c. Very ſoon the ſlaves of the neighbouring plantations, connected with thoſe of the town, will carry home the

the diſcourſes they have heard, and comment upon them in their own way. " If theſe whites are only " free to-day," they will ſay, " what were they " then yeſterday? Slaves like ourſelves "—and God preſerve me from being a witneſs of the conſequences of this mode of reaſoning! To diſcuſs the *Rights of Men* before ſuch people, what is it but to teach them that power dwells with ſtrength, and ſtrength with numbers!

Will you have, Sir, my parting word on this country? It is that the more I know the inhabitants, the more I felicitate myſelf on quitting it. I came hither with the *noble* ambition of occupying myſelf ſolely in acquiring a fortune; but deſtined to become a *maſter*, and conſequently to poſſeſs *ſlaves*, I ſaw, in the neceſſity of living with them, that of ſtudying them with attention to know them —and I depart with much leſs eſteem for the one, and pity for the other. When a perſon is what the greater part of the planters are, he is made to have ſlaves: when he is what the greater part of the ſlaves are, he is made to have a maſter: TOUT LE MONDE EST ICI A SA PLACE.

LET-

LETTER XXXVI.

At Sea,
July 1790.

I LITTLE expected, Sir, that the laſt moments of my reſidence at Saint Domingo were to be marked by an event, of which the iſſue might have detained me there longer than I wiſhed, if I had not judged it improper to take an active part in a diſpute which both ſides ſeem to have carried too far. Not that I would not, with the greateſt pleaſure, have contributed with all my might to the ſucceſs of any enterprize capable of re-eſtabliſhing the public concord: but ſeeing, after waiting ſeveral days, that nothing was decided; and that, having begun by a raſh and inconſiderate ſtep, they took no prompt and vigorous meaſures to ſuſtain it, I went on board on the evening of the 10th, and ſet ſail immediately after.

I leave the gazettes, and the relations of the two parties, to inform you of what paſſed; obſerving only that I draw a very melancholy preſage from it, of the future deſtiny of the colony. *

* The reader will find, in an intereſting work lately publiſhed at Paris, intitled *Déſaſtres de Saint Domingue*, that I was but too true a prophet.

Whatever, Sir, may be the motives which determined the conduct of the two parties, both appear to have been deficient in prudence and moderation. The colonial aſſembly in taking the military habit, the inauſpicious characteriſtic of a dark conſpiracy; and the government in oppoſing it by an armed force, which has occaſioned the ſhedding of blood; while, ſupported by its ancient influence, by the public opinion, and by the beſt wiſhes of every honeſt man, it might have eaſily diſperſed, without ſtriking a ſingle blow, an aſſembly, which by its heterogeneous compoſition, its refractory ſpirit, and its avowed hoſtility to lenient meaſures, had already deprived itſelf of the ſuccour of opinion, pretty generally declared in favour of any prudent and deciſive ſtep which promiſed to maintain tranquillity and good order.

Unhappily, Sir, the tutelary force from whence this bleſſing ought to have flowed, was compoſed of two elements, whoſe combination has always been productive of misfortunes; doubt and irreſolution in him who ſtammers out his orders; confidence and raſhneſs in him who ſolicits them with more warmth than reflection, and executes them with more impetuoſity than prudence.

The preference given to the white over the tricoloured cockade, might poſſibly be meritorious in him

him who looked upon it as the ſignal of his devotement—but, in ſuppoſing he had joined to ſome ſlight conceſſions on this head, a firm declaration to maintain, at all events, the order which culpable perturbators were endeavouring to deſtroy, I have not the ſmalleſt doubt but that ſuch an act of complaiſance, (which certainly could not in this inſtance be regarded as a proof of weakneſs) would have had the happieſt effect, by depriving his enemies of the opportunity of calumniating his intentions. Time will ſhew whether I am in the right.

Would you believe that, waked in a fright by the confuſed mixture of tumultuous cries, vague interpellations, and indiſtinct ſhrieks, interrupted by the claſh of arms, and the noiſe of muſquetry and cannon; would you believe that, in the midſt of the diſorder, increaſed by the darkneſs of the night, of a city, of which one part of the inhabitants ran headlong into the danger they ſought to ſhun, while the other, ſtupified with fear, ſcarce retained preſence of mind enough to conceal themſelves: would you believe that a culpable ſmile eſcaped me at the ſight of certain men, long indignant at not uniting to the treaſures of opulence, the trifling prerogatives which conſole nobility for its poverty, and who have every where been the firſt to blow up the coals of a devouring fire, which

after having conſumed thoſe fantaſtic poſſeſſions, will not be long in involving more ſubſtantial ones in the blaze; would you believe, I ſay, that I ſmiled at ſeeing thoſe fervent promoters of LIBERTY and EQUALITY, trembling at the preſent moment for property more ſolid than vain titles of honour, join themſelves to the ARISTOCRACY, which had ſtill power to ſave their magazines, and their accompt-books from the gripe of the EQUALITY of fortune, and from the LIBERTY of ſeizing it!

I do not know whether this firſt leſſon will henceforth render egoiſm more wiſe, and vanity more modeſt—but in caſe the progreſs of events ſhould neceſſitate the ſacrifice of a victim, I do not ſee that there would be much to regret if the ravages of the flames, kindled by the prieſts of Plutus, ſhould terminate with the conflagration of his temple.

However this may be, Sir, I leave the legiſlative aſſembly diſperſed and put to flight by the fire of the cannon; the power a little too *executive*, embarraſſed with its victory, and doubtful what it ſhould do to juſtify its neceſſity, and turn it to the beſt advantage: the public in that ſtate of ſtupor and incertitude which uſually ſucceeds a violent commotion; and my old friend the Chamber of Commerce very happy at having ſaved its magazines,

zines, and very buſy in ſecuring them from the next attempt of the ſovereign people.

Although the public peace was ſo far reſtored as to allow of my ſtaying long enough at Port-au-Prince to make an excurſion in the plain of the Cul-de-Sac, which I purpoſed to puſh as far as poſſible, Monſ. Lynham, Captain of the Flora, manifeſted ſo much anxiety to quit the coaſt, although his veſſel had not all her cargo on board, that, uncertain whether I ſhould find with another the ſame conveniencies which his ſhip, his ſociety, and the arrangements we had made, ſeemed to promiſe, I finally determined to embark with him.

I went on board, then, as I have already ſaid, on the tenth, about midnight. We took advantage of the morning breeze, and in a few hours had made a good offing, leaving the uncultivated iſland of Gonave to leeward. The next day we paſſed the Lucayes, ſeveral of which did not appear ſo uninhabitable as I had been told they were. They want wood and water, it is true, but with regular rains, and ciſterns, amends may be made for the latter of theſe privations. For the former, indeed, it is not ſo eaſy to find a reſource: but, beſides that the natural ſterility of any ſpot ſeldom

oppoſes

oppoſes an invincible obſtacle to human induſtry *; the proximity of Saint Domingo would admit of the importation of an article, the want of which is not very imperiouſly felt in theſe climates. And I do not doubt, if that iſland ſhould ever become ſo populous as to oblige a part of its inhabitants to ſeek an abode elſewhere, but the induſtry of emigration, always extremely laborious, active, and ingenious, would do at the Lucayes what it has often done in other places.

There is, Sir, in every man, whoſe deſtiny tranſports him to a new and virgin ſoil, a principle of intelligence and energy which may be reckoned upon, and which is capable of every thing, when ſeconded by a good adminiſtration. This principle is the ſentiment of property, which is to our civil, what the conſciouſneſs of our virtues is to our moral exiſtence; that is to ſay, the key-ſtone which ſupports the ſentiment of our proper dignity. It is this which almoſt every where in the new world, and eſpecially in the country where I am going, has transformed hordes of malefactors, of indolent and

* I ſhall cite, by way of example, Pruſſian, Dutch, and Auſtrian Guilders, where, in 1793, I ſaw the ſame heaths which I had left perfectly ſterile in 1776, covered with woods, by the provident induſtry of the inhabitants. Now it is certain that a ſoil which produces an oak or a fir, may be equally made to produce an ear of corn or a potatoe.

thoughtleſs

thoughtleſs vagabonds, into a race of men, prudent, honeſt and laborious.

M. Lynham, whom I like exceedingly, flatters himſelf that we ſhall be at Norfolk in little more than ten or twelve days. The wind, however, begins to ſhuffle, the horizon thickens with black and louring clouds, the ſea grows hollow; in a word, ſigns, which I think I cannot miſtake, announce to me that we ſhall not reach Virginia either ſo ſoon or ſo tranquilly as I expected. My conductors certainly know more of the matter than myſelf; and yet, on theſe occaſions, I have often ſeen the preſcience of the moſt ſkilful mariners intirely baffled; becauſe, of all mankind, they are perhaps the moſt ſubject to ſacrifice the monitions of experience to the illuſions of hope. I have ſeen enough to convince me that, out of ten ſhipwrecks, or unlucky accidents, five at leaſt may be attributed, either to the imprudence of the ſailors, or the avarice of the merchants, who ſeldom proportion the crews to the ſize of the ſhips—Thus, of two captains, the one raſh, the other cautious, the former will loſe maſts, ſails, men, and ſhips; the latter, ſomething ſtill more precious to the trader, and for which nothing can compenſate, time, irreparable time!

LET-

LETTER XXXVII.

At Sea,
July 1790.

IT has nearly happened to me, Sir, as to the poor Caſſandra. In vain did I propheſy; every one laughed at my predictions; and yet we owe our ſafety ſolely to the ſtrength of our ſhip.

We paſſed two days in that ſort of ſtormy calm which I mentioned in my laſt. Thick and gloomy clouds accumulated in every point of the horizon: already the indiſtinct and lengthened mutterings of thunder ſtruck the ear from thoſe obſcure and immoveable maſſes, which were croſſed from time to time by long flaſhes of pale and ſickly fire. Not a breath of air indicated from what quarter of the globe its relaxed ſpring would finally impel and ſet in motion this tremendous apparatus. Never did ſtorm preſent a more alarming ſpectacle than this, of a calm which joined all the ſymptoms of fury to the immobility of death! Each of us was contemplating it with a ſad and ſilent inquietude, when, a little before midnight, the ſky ſeemed to clear up in the South-Weſt, from whence the wind

ſuddenly

ſuddenly blew as if ſome inviſible hand had removed the valve which detained it in captivity.

We proceeded on our rout, at firſt with caution, afterwards with a ſufficient degree of courage to join to the top-ſails, the main-ſail and the mizen.

Although I apprehended that this was placing rather too much confidence in a wind, whoſe abrupt commencement filled me with ſuſpicion; yet as Captain Lynham ſet me the example, I went to lie down like him, and like him, too, ſhould have fallen aſleep, if the violence with which the waves daſhed againſt the ſides of the veſſel had not advertiſed me that the ſea was riſing with the wind.

I had taken notice that our firſt mate was one of thoſe men with whom an inconſiderate kind of careleſſneſs ſupplies the place of courage, and whoſe whole theory is confined to the routine of an experience, far from extenſive. Urged by a ſort of activity which I can hardly venture to attribute to a nobler motive than mere reſtleſſneſs, I went upon deck—What was my aſtoniſhment to find every body in the moſt perfect ſecurity, amidſt the moſt deciſive marks of an outrageous tempeſt; and a part of the crew gaily employed in hoiſting the top-gallant-ſails, as if we had been under the peaceable influence of the trade winds!

Good

Good God, Sir! ſaid I to the firſt mate, who was careleſsly ſtretched on the quarter deck, what are you thinking of—to carry ſo many ſails in ſuch weather as this! " 'Tis nothing," ſaid he without ſtirring from his place. Thinking it, however, a great deal too much, I went below to inform the captain of it, who was ſtill aſleep, and whom I had ſome little difficulty to wake. While he was putting on his clothes, and I was preparing to follow him, a dreadful craſh made us run to the cabin ſtairs —it was too late! a torrent of water ruſhing down the narrow paſſage, daſhed us both backwards upon the floor.

Recovering from the blow, which had ſtunned us, we ſprang upon the deck, ſtruggling with the fury of deſpair againſt the waves which aſſailed us: but, O God! what a ſpectacle! Our two maſts, loaded with all their ſails, and broken, the one lying acroſs the deck, the other hanging from the iron work of the main-top, kept the veſſel ſo completely under water, that we had the utmoſt difficulty to reach the aft part of the quarter deck, the only part of the hulk that was not ſubmerged, and to which I immediately laſhed myſelf with one of the broken halyards.

Of ſeven ſeamen, including our raſh and improvident mate, this laſt in attempting, when too late,

to

to aſſiſt in furling the ſails, had fallen from the main-top-maſt-yard, and ſprained his back; another had broken his right arm; and a third, in endeavouring to furl the fore-top-gallant-ſail, had been precipitated with the maſt into the ſea. There remained then but four men—but ſuch men! Never did intrepidity and coolneſs perform greater prodigies of courage, ſtrength, and preſence of mind! As oft as the rapidity with which the enormous mountains of water that ſucceſſively overwhelmed us, left us a moment to take breath, and think of our ſafety, our ſailors ſeized the lucky interval to clear away, with their hatchets the rigging that ſtill kept the maſts attached to the ſhip. We were more than half an hour in the dim and doubtful twilight which divides life from death, as the dawn of a cloudy day ſeparates the uncertain beams of the morning from the ſhades of night.

Let me confeſs my weakneſs, Sir. Not relying for our ſafety altogether on ordinary means, I judged it neceſſary to have recourſe to a power whoſe intervention has always been efficacious. Addreſſing myſelf, therefore, to the crew, I pronounced aloud the vow of—diſtributing among them a bag of piaſtres which I held in my hand, if they ſucceeded in ſaving us: and they redoubled their efforts.

At length the Flora, diſembarraſſed from the wreck which incumbered her, righted with every ſhock, and, in a ſhort time, recovered her proper trim.

This moment, which we awaited with a kind of religious horror, and which was ſurely for us the *moment ſuprême*, was the ſignal of our ſalvation, and of a ſentiment more ſweet than that of joy—for joy has a voice, and we had only tears.

I now, for the firſt time, perceived that *ſome one*, enveloped in the ſkirts of a riding-coat which I had ſlipped on in my haſte, was cloſely embracing my legs. This *ſome one* was a large ape, who, having in the tumult broken the rope that attached him to the ſtern, had taken refuge with me. Thus I had ſtill ſerved for an aſylum to an unfortunate being, when I no longer ſaw any for myſelf!

Hitherto we had not found that any perſon was miſſing; but now, in calling over the names, we found that we had loſt our youngeſt ſailor; and we concluded that he muſt have fallen over-board with the top-gallant-ſail he was furling. The crew immediately had recourſe to their ſpeaking-trumpets; at length ſome one tranquilly replied (in his own language) "I am coming." This vigorous young man had clung faſt to the wreck of the maſt, where,

when

when he ſaw his opportunity, he had ſtruggled ſo efficaciouſly, and ſhifted with ſo much preſence of mind from fragment to fragment, and from rope to rope, that he finally " came " on deck. Judge if he was well received!

We were ſtill, however, far from being in a proſperous ſtate; but we were ſafe for the moment, and as a traveller has well obſerved, " the unfortunate " are not ſlow to hope *: " we therefore indulged that of extricating ourſelves, though nothing announced that the winds and waves would ſo ſpeedily abate—and on what, think you, was our hope founded? On that which cauſes the deſpair of others; on our having nothing more to loſe.

We tried the pumps, and found that the ſhip made no more water than uſual; this, in our diſtreſs, was a circumſtance no leſs rare than fortunate. All our maſts were reduced to the ſtump of the mizen: the wind therefore had no longer any hold of us;—ſo that by nailing down the hatches we might, like the family of Noah, have braved in our ark, all the fury of the ocean. And, indeed, it was by this we terminated the labours, or, as I ſhould rather call them, the combats of a night as long as diſaſtrous, and during which I had

* *Naufrage et Aventures de Pierre Viaud.*

more

more than once repeated, from I know not what poet,

" O! que la nuit eſt longue à la douleur qui veille!"

The day brought back fair weather much ſooner than we expected, and with it the means of recovering ſuch parts of the wreck of our rigging as the ſea had not ſwept away, i. e. ſome of the halyards, the mizen-yard with the ſail ſtill fixed, and the top, which we ſucceeded, after incredible efforts, in replacing.

Unhappily, ſhips not deſtined for long voyages are ſeldom provided with ſpare maſts and ſails. This was the caſe with ours. The ſecond day after our diſaſter, when it became neceſſary to think of repairing our loſſes, we could find nothing in the ſail-room but a main-top-gallant-ſail, a ſtay-ſail, a few ells of new canvaſs, and a little cordage: on the deck we had only a top-maſt.

I will ſpare you, Sir, the long enumeration of the reſources we found in our induſtry. The recital of the perils of a man, ſtruggling againſt nature, adverſity, and death, may have an intereſt with his fellow creatures, which cannot be hoped for from a detail of the efforts of his intelligence only—I ſhall content myſelf, then, with ſaying that the

the top-maſt, fixed to the ſtump of the main-maſt, ſtood in its ſtead; that the main-top-gallant-ſail, enlarged with a few breadths of new canvaſs, ſerved for a main-ſail; that the ſheets of my bed furniſhed a fore-topſail, which was ſupported by a maſt made of a bundle of laths unfold at Saint Domingo; that the coverture of my bed, joined to that of Captain Lynham's, made a kind of mizen, which was hoiſted on the enſign-ſtaff; and that by means of this apparatus, a little leſs highly finiſhed than that of the veſſel which carried Cleopatra, we had the ſatisfaction of finding ourſelves in a condition to run three or four knots an hour with a moderate wind.

By our reckoning we were not more than two hundred leagues from land. We had ſeen ſeveral ſhips, who taking us at a diſtance, perhaps, for a Barbary cruizer, drew near to reconnoitre us—but after certifying themſelves that inſtead of pirates we were only people in diſtreſs, no ſignals that we could make, could induce them to offer us the aſſiſtance of which we ſtood ſo much in need. One of them came cloſe enough to be hailed, but in inſtead of condeſcending to anſwer us, bore away on a different tack—at this baſe and unfeeling egoiſm, you will recognize, Sir, the worthy inſtruments of the avarice which employs them. Had not Captain Lynham been more prudent than myſelf, we ſhould, with the aſſiſtance of our four

pieces

pieces of cannon, have ſent this hard-hearted Phariſee all the langridge we had on board. As cruelty is always cowardly, I do not doubt but our boldneſs would have made him give to fear what he denied to humanity—and, perhaps, I ſhould have done right: for a contrary wind, by prolonging our voyage, may ſtill reduce us to dreadful extremities; or blowing weather deprive us, piece by piece, of our wretched rigging; and then—what will become of us!

LETTER XXXVIII.

Norfolk, in Virginia,
Auguſt 1790.

ONE would think, Sir, that wherever I went, ſhips were purpoſely ſtationed to receive and carry you my letters. I found three here on the point of ſailing for France, with almoſt the whole of the cargoes they brought out. I will tell you another time, the cauſe of this error in the ſpeculations of the

the French merchants; at preſent I muſt finiſh the narrative of our ill-omened paſſage.

More lucky than we had any reaſon to expect, the wind, conſtantly moderate and favourable, allowed us to make uſe of *all* our ſails. We had need of them to ſtem a current two or three leagues in extent; and of a wonderful rapidity; which, running from the gulph of Mexico, croſſes the ſtreights of the Bahama iſlands, in a direction diametrically oppoſite to the wind, and produces a kind of race, which occaſioned our ſhip to roll ſo prodigiouſly, that if we had carried top-maſts would probably have brought them to the board.

We were near ſeven hours in croſſing this ſpecies of torrent in a diagonal line; and I know no contraſt more diſagreeable than that of experiencing with a ſerene ſky, and a favourable wind, all the diſguſting circumſtances of the moſt laborious navigation. It would not be impoſſible, Sir, for the pilot who ſhould follow our track with the wind in the direction of the current, ſuppoſing him to be not altogether furniſhed with the neceſſary knowledge, to find, at the end of twenty-four hours, a miſ-reckoning, ſo much the more unaccountable in his opinion, as the agreement of the wind and the tide, rendering the exiſtence of the latter

ſcarce perceptible, he would not even think of calculating his drift to leeward.

Notwithſtanding the obſervations of many well-informed mariners, I am inclined to think we have yet but a very imperfect theory of the currents: and our merchant-ſhips taking advantage of this circumſtance, never fail to attribute to them the numerous errors which reſult from their own negligence or incapacity. Such a theory, however, is of the utmoſt importance; and if the habitude of obſerving every thing could give any weight to my opinion, I ſhould ſay that M. de Saint Pierre ſeems to have made a decided progreſs in the career of nature, by attributing to the periodical melting of the polar ſnows thoſe currents, which his adverſaries, with much leſs appearance of probability, go to look for in the moon. At preſent, when, thanks to the ſimple and luminous ſyſtem of the author of the *Etudes de la Nature*, Experience is no longer obliged to mount to the ſtars in ſearch of the cauſe of an effect which lies directly before us, we may indulge a hope that ſhe will at length give us a reaſonable ſolution of a problem, and thus contribute to the perfection of an art, dangerous without doubt, but where the ſlighteſt error may be attended with the moſt deplorable conſequences.

Navigation,

Navigation, in this part of the new world, is rendered dangerous in foggy or bluſtering weather, by the extreme lowneſs of the land. It is particularly ſo in Virginia, where, at only two leagues diſtance, you diſtinguiſh the firs which grow along the ſhore, without ſeeing the ſhore itſelf; ſo that they ſeem to riſe out of the ocean, which has a ſingular and ſtriking effect. Aware, however, of the danger, they are extremely careful to ſend out coaſting pilots to meet ſuch veſſels as are expected; and in no country, no not even in England, have I ſeen this ſpecies of boat better, or more elegantly conſtructed. It would be no great exaggeration to ſay of them, that they ſwim like fiſhes.

The firſt that boarded us in the morning of the 30th of July, was commanded by a negro—ſtrange revolution of principles for a man juſt arrived from Saint Domingo! We engaged him to pilot us between Cape Charles and Cape Henry, ſo baptized by the celebrated John Smith, ſurnamed, by way of diſtinction, *The Navigator*. Theſe two Capes, diſcovered in May 1607, by Captain Newport, form the entrance of Cheſapeak-Bay, in 37° of latitude, the firſt to the North, the ſecond to the South. They are ſeparated by a channel of eighteen miles wide, in the midſt of which we caſt anchor about five in the morning: the ebb, ſtrengthened by the acceſſion of ſeveral ſtreams, which, in Eu-

rope, might paſs for rivers, not permitting us to make Norfolk till the turn of the tide.

A delay, which condemned us to paſs another night at ſea, ſuited Captain Lynham as little as myſelf. We were therefore put aſhore on the ſide of Cape Charles, at the extremity of a ſort of peninſula, formed by the Delaware on the north, and the Cheſapeak on the ſouth.

Aſſuredly, Sir, for thoſe who arrive from Saint Domingo, the ſight of this happy country is a charming ſpectacle! I was never weary of comparing the gloomy habitations I had juſt left, with the neat and elegant houſes on every ſide of me, and the appearance of general eaſe and comfort with the pretended opulence of thoſe, whoſe moſt fervent wiſh it is to quit the ſoil from which they draw their ſuſtenance and their wealth! I ſhould ſtrive in vain to deſcribe to you the pleaſure I felt on coaſting along the ſhore at the decline of a fine day: it is beyond my power—but if any one at that moment had propoſed to me to go on board again, to ſeek, only at the diſtance of a few leagues, as many golden fleeces as there are leaves on all the trees of Colchis, I ſhould have anſwered him only with a ſmile of contempt.

As we were obliged to make ſeveral detours to paſs ſome little creeks, unprovided with bridges,

we

we did not reach Hampton till night. It is a village, compoſed, like moſt of thoſe I ſaw in North America, of regular ſtreets, and decent houſes. Here we drank tea, while we waited for the paſſage boat which was to take us to Norfolk, diſtant about ſixty miles.

We embarked between ſeven and eight o'clock. The wind was fair at firſt, but a ſtorm which was gathering on the coaſt, having nearly becalmed us, Captain Lynham, who was anxious to get home, got into a little ſkiff we had in tow, and landed on the right bank of James' River, from whence he proceeded on foot.

The companions of my voyage were three ſailors, and a Jew, who laid down the inſtant we came on board, and fell faſt aſleep. After an hour's calm, the ſtorm which had taken our wind from us, reſtored it with intereſt. Although it bent the two long maſts which carried two large ſquare ſails, no precautions were taken to reduce them; while the maſter amuſed himſelf with detailing to me at great length, the hiſtory of ſeveral boats like his own, which had been loſt in the paſſage, for want, as he ſaid, of attending properly to the winds from the ſhore. This was a hint which was not thrown away upon me: I took my ſeat at the foot of one of

of the maſts, with my knife in my hand, ready to cut the halyards if the ſquall increaſed.

Neither the redoubled claps of thunder, nor the daſhing of the waves, could prevail upon the Iſraelite to get up. It was to no purpoſe to wake him, he dropt aſleep again in an inſtant. If ſecurity in danger be the fruit of experience, it may be preſumed that this ſprig of Abraham was with Moſes at the paſſage of the Red Sea.

About one in the morning we arrived at Norfolk: at landing I found Captain Lynham and his brother, who had been civil enough to provide a bed for me at their houſe: but, as I purpoſed ſtaying here a few days to recover from my fatigues, I took up my lodgings at the inn, where I received a viſit the next morning from our vice conſul, Monſ. Oſter, at the moment I was ſetting out to call upon him, and with whom I dined in company with Captain Lynham and his brother.

Norfolk will be a tolerable town when it has repaired ſome ruins which ſtill atteſt that it ſuffered in the revolution. The tradition which informs us it was called *Pouhatan* by the ſavages, proves it to be an ancient eſtabliſhment of a people, who, in ſuch a ſituation could be little more than fiſhers. It is at preſent the chief town of a county of its own

own name in the State of Virginia—ſurrounded by barren ſands, and marſhes, which muſt render it very unhealthy in ſummer, it would never have obtained its preſent rank, if its ſituation, favourable for trade, had not rendered it the mart of all the productions of lower Virginia.

I have had a very long and very inſtructive converſation with Monſieur Oſter, which ſhall be the ſubject of my next letter.

LETTER XXXIX.

Norfolk,
Auguſt 1790.

MONSIEUR Oſter, who unites a great degree of complaiſance and civility, to all the knowledge neceſſary for a man in his ſituation, has had the goodneſs to communicate to me a Memoire which he has ſent to the Miniſtry, on the Commercial Relations of France and America.

This

This Memoire is full of the moſt judicious obſervations, the moſt inſtructive details, and the moſt extenſive views: but I have ventured to predict to the author that it will have no effect—becauſe the French miniſtry is yet far from comprehending the nature of the ties, which, ſince the diſcovery of the two Indies, connect the commerce of a ſtate to its government; ties which England alone ſeems fully to have underſtood, and of which France and Holland appear to have been equally ignorant; ſince one has ſacrificed commerce to power, that is, the proſperity of her eſtabliſhments to a military force; and the other every precaution of ſtrength and ſecurity to the extenſion and activity of her commerce.

Both you and I, Sir, have more than once regretted when together, that in the number of offices which compoſe the different departments of adminiſtration, there was not one ſpecifically charged with the examination of *Projects:* and my regrets have been renewed ſince I read the Memoire of Monſ. Oſter. *

According

* It is curious to obſerve at the preſent moment, that Mirabeau the father wrote more than thirty years ago—" There is nothing " ſo mad and extravagant that human reaſon may not be induced " to look upon as wiſdom. The time will come when we ſhall " ſee offices opened, whoſe functions may be expreſſed by this " title,

According to this gentleman, France has let ſlip a moſt favourable opportunity of ſubſtituting her commerce here in the place of that of England, at the commencement of the revolution. She had then, over her rival, the prodigious advantage of being able to furniſh the United States with the principal articles, ſuch as cloaths, cottons, wines, &c. of a ſuperior quality, and at a lower price than England could poſſibly afford them. But, withheld by their doubts reſpecting the ſucceſs of the revolution, and by the impoſſibility of granting the Americans the credit which they obtained from the Engliſh, our merchants confined themſelves to a few timid eſſays, a few partial conſignments, which, together with their abſurd combinations—(abſurd, becauſe they ſhocked the prejudices, habits, and taſtes of their new cuſtomers) ſoon ſickened both parties of a trade, of which the continuance could only be purchaſed, on the ſide of the French, by expenſive and reiterated ſacrifices.

This did not eſcape the notice of the Engliſh; and accordingly the communication was no ſooner opened between the *ci-devant* mother country and her colonies, than, far from calling in their old

" title, *Tribunal of Devaſtation!*" The ſon has not a little contributed to advance the accompliſhment of the father's prediction: and the *Committee of Public Safety* does not ill reſemble the *Tribunal of Devaſtation*. See *L'Ami des Hommes*. Tome 1. Chap. 3.

debts,

debts, they haſtened to offer additional credit to their debtors—and from that moment all was loſt to France!

To this major conſideration may be added a few others of little leſs importance: for firſt, the French merchants no ſooner fancied themſelves in a ſituation to trade here without the danger of a competition, than they raiſed the price, and debaſed the quality of their merchandize: then, ſpeculating with no leſs heedleſſneſs than avidity, more on the reſources which French induſtry ſeemed to hold out to them, than on the ſimplicity of manners of a people too prudent to gratify their whims before they had provided for their wants, they poured in a prodigious quantity of thoſe gewgaws of luxury and taſte, which found as few purchaſers as admirers. The reſult was a triple deficit; 1°. The expences of fitting out; 2°. The merchandize, which was either ſold at a great loſs, or carried back, and, 3°. The profits they expected to derive from their imports—for the purchaſe of which they had reckoned intirely on the produce of the wares which remained unſold.

But independent of the reaſons drawn from the inſufficient means, and erroneous ſpeculations of the French merchants, there are conſiderations totally independent of policy and intereſt, which muſt

and

and will for ever aſſure the Engliſh the almoſt excluſive commerce of the United States : theſe are, in the firſt place, the conſanguinity of the two people, and, in the ſecond, the ſimilarity of religion, language, manners, taſtes, &c.

I regard, then, as a political hereſy, the general opinion that France has given a mortal blow to the commerce and power of England, by ſetting on foot and actually effecting the independence of America *. It is true, the Engliſh miniſtry have loſt the right of diſpoſing of a number of civil and military employs ; of receiving taxes, which never defrayed the expences of the adminiſtration ; of levying troops, for which it has no occaſion ſince the ceſſion of Canada ; and of procuring ſailors whom it does not want, or whom, if it does, it can always have for money.

But what is the effect generally, I believe I may ſay univerſally, expected from the independence of

* It was the Duke de Choiſeuil who not only conceived, but prepared the inſurrection of the Engliſh Colonies. Since I have been here I have received the moſt undoubted proofs, that, ſo early as the year 1766, he diſpatched the Baron de Kalbe to Philadelphia, to ſound the inhabitants, and endeavour to detach them from the mother country. This miniſter had very little idea that he was thereby laying the foundation of the French Revolution—And thus it is that Fortune amuſes herſelf with confounding the calculations of the ſublime politics of courts!

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the United States? A ſenſible increaſe of population, territory, and cultivation, which is every day juſtified by facts. And what will be the conſequence? That the conſumption of the manufactures of Europe will neceſſarily keep pace with the progreſs of cultivation and population, until the period, yet extremely remote, when agriculture and commerce ſhall reſtore to induſtry and the arts, the ſuperabundance of population. And, as I have mentioned the reaſons why England muſt neceſſarily poſſeſs the excluſive commerce of the United States, it will be that country which, in the end, inſtead of loſing, will have gained every thing by a revolution from which we fondly predicted her ruin!

I will ſay more, Sir;—I will ſay that if ever the chance of political revolutions ſhould bring about an event which might compromiſe the exiſtence of England, ſhe will inevitably find in the alliance of her ancient colonies, all the aſſiſtance ſhe may need to enable her to preſerve her due weight in the balance of Europe. Yes, Sir, the ſame country which formerly ſupplied her only with ſoldiers and ſailors, will then ſupply her with fleets and armies.

Undoubtedly, if we were to form our opinion from that which perſonal animoſities*, and the recollection

* Several inſtances of the falſe and calumnious judgments, dictated

collection of civil diſcords have generated in the minds of a few individuals of both nations, we might fancy that England and America would never be ſincerely united. But theſe kinds of feelings are tranſitory—Nations muſt be looked upon as combatants for hire, whoſe animoſity never ſurvives the event: and the philoſopher who knows how to make allowance for accidental cauſes, pierces with a ſteady eye through the miſt, which the prejudices of the moment raiſe between him and the natural order of things.

It muſt not be concealed, however, that they are endeavouring here to open a direct communication with China, and, conſequently, to deprive Great Britain of the advantages of this branch of commerce. They muſt be conſiderable, if we may judge from the obſtinacy with which the Engliſh government perſiſted in maintaining the duty on tea; chooſing rather to run the expence of a war, and riſk the loſs of America, than relax an iota on the point.

I preſume that England (for the American commerce is, and will be for many years to come, to-

dictated by injuſtice to the ſpirit of party, may be found in a work entitled "*Travels into the Interior parts of North America* "*by an Engliſh Officer*," in two volumes.

tally

tally inadequate to the demands of the home conſumption) I preſume, I ſay, that England will ſtill ſupply no inconſiderable part of it; and that the loſs ſhe may ſuſtain in this ſingle inſtance, will be more than balanced by the profits ſhe will continue to make on the different articles of her manufactures, and on a conſumption which ſhe will always have the addreſs to ſupply.

Notwithſtanding my grave reſolution to tempt no more, unleſs in caſe of abſolute neceſſity, the dangers of the ſea, I have taken a paſſage in an American veſſel, bound directly for Philadelphia. My luggage is already on board; I ſhall follow it this evening, and in the courſe of the night we ſhall ſet ſail.

LETTER XL.

Norfolk,
September 1790.

THE wind, which was contrary the whole of yeſterday, prevented us from ſailing: after ſleeping on board, therefore, I went a-ſhore in the morning

morning to viſit Captain Lynham, who made me a propoſal which has totally changed the direction of my itinerary. Having hired a bark, which he intends to command himſelf, to carry a part of his cargo to Alexandria, he preſſed me with a kindneſs which I could not reſiſt, to accompany him.

I have left, then, my trunks aboard the American, taking with me but a few neceſſaries for a week's expedition.

This new arrangement is by ſo much the more flattering to my inquiſitive diſpoſition, as it will give me an opportunity of traverſing a part of the country, which I ſhould not otherwiſe have ſeen.

We ſhall ſail up the Cheſapeak along the coaſts of Virginia and Maryland, to the mouth of the Potomack, and up this river to Alexandria—from thence I ſhall paſs, through Anapolis and Baltimore, to Philadelphia.

If I thus make a *detour* of ſome hundred miles, I ſhall at leaſt have the pleaſure of ſubſtituting, for a voyage by ſea, always tedious, and ſometimes dangerous, with people whom I do not know, a ſafe and agreeable navigation with a ſociable man, whom I may queſtion as much as I pleaſe, without

any

any fear of exhauſting, either his politeneſs, or his good nature.

I ſhall not yet, Sir, venture to give you my opinion on the new people with whom I am about to reſide. The effect of the firſt impreſſion will probably be different here, from what it was at Saint Domingo; for I have yet ſeen nothing to affect the favourable prejudices with which I arrived.

I confeſs, however, that what we vulgarly call manners, forms in this country, in ſome inſtances at leaſt, a very ſingular contraſt to the good-breeding of Europe. I was, for example, two days ago, dining at a table d'hôte with a pretty numerous party, when a perſon, who ſat at my right hand, ſuffered one of thoſe ſighs to eſcape from his breaſt, to which the delicacy of our language will not permit me to give its real name. I ſhould have looked upon it as an accident, or a liberty allowable in an old man, if he had not been ſucceſſively imitated by the reſt of his countrymen, who gave themſelves up to the buſineſs with a gravity which I had the utmoſt difficulty to withſtand—you would have ſworn there was an emulation amongſt them. Happily the evacuation of theſe ſpecies of Eolipyles was confined to the ſuperior organ; and I was falling into a reverie on the extraordinary cuſtom I had witneſſed, when my attention was rouſed anew by

by a circumſtance which gave a very different turn to my reflections.

I had juſt called for ſomething to drink, when a large bowl of punch was introduced, and preſented by the waiter to the eldeſt perſon in the company. The old gentleman drank out of it, and paſſed it to his next neighbour, who paſſed it to the next, till from hand to hand it had made the tour of the table. Great, Sir, as my aſtoniſhment was at this cuſtom, I did not fail to drink out of the bowl with reſpect, as out of the hoſpitable cup of antiquity. With us, a delicate nation, and frequently as unſound in body as in mind, ſuch a practice would be no leſs dangerous than ridiculous; but here, amongſt a people equally ſound in both, it is the evidence of a confidence too rare not to induce us to admire in it that precious ſimplicity of manners, of which it recals the remembrance *.

* It was well obſerved by the Monthly Reviewers in the courſe of their ſtrictures on ſome French Travels into North America, that if our neighbours would condeſcend to viſit us before they embarked for that country, they would find but little novelty in it. The cuſtom which appeared ſo ſtrange to the Baron de Wimpffen, and which he appears to value ſo highly, as a relique of ancient ſimplicity, prevails in every village in England—more, I believe, from a want of cups and glaſſes, than from any other conſideration, ſocial or moral. T.

On the eve of plunging into the continent of the new world, I expect to be ſome time without finding an opportunity of writing to you: I ſhall not for that be the more inactive; for, when we love to find reaſons for our judgments, and to account to ourſelves for our enjoyments, to enjoy and obſerve become of themſelves occupations.

If our judgments depend in any degree on the good or bad diſpoſition of our minds, I fear I am in no ſmall danger of viewing things with too favourable an eye. I will do all I can, however, to avoid it; and, I hope, with ſo much the more chance of ſucceſs, as one muſt be born, in my opinion, with a force of imagination which I am far from poſſeſſing, to ſee any thing more in the inhabitants of this new ſtate, than men who have preſerved the purity of their manners amidſt the diſorders of a revolution, and not ſuffered the courage with which they ſecured their rights, nor the vigour with which they defended their liberty, to degenerate, the one into fanaticiſm, the other into ferocity—and aſſuredly this is a great deal.

Would to God, Sir, that poſterity may one day ſay the ſame thing of you! Here they believe it will; becauſe we generally judge of others by ourſelves, and becauſe the ſelf-love of the Americans is flattered by the thought of having been your maſters

maſters in the twofold art *de ravir la foudre au Ciel, et le Sceptre aux Tyrans* *. But when we compare, however, the inſtitutions, the manners, and the ways of thinking of the two nations, we are tempted to wiſh, rather than to expect it.

* It is well known that the enthuſiaſm of one of our poets inſcribed this verſe under the portrait of Franklin. A ſhort time before his death ſome one talked to him of the revolution which was then beginning to break out in France. "FRANCE," ſaid he, "WANTS REFORMS, AND NOT REVOLUTIONS: THE REMEDY "WILL BE WORSE THAN THE DISEASE!"

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